



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

# HERE BELOW

BY JOSEPH ALAN SCOFIELD



GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

# ROWLANDS' ODONTO



Is the best Tooth Powder; whitens the teeth and prevents decay; contains no acid or gritty substances. Avoid worthless imitations, and buy only ROWLANDS' ODONTO.

Sold Everywhere.

Sent by Post for 2s. 11d. by

**A. ROWLAND & SONS, 20, Hatton Garden, London.**



## KEATING'S COUGH LOZENGES,

BEST AND SURE REMEDY FOR

## COUGHS, ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS.

Sold in Tins, 1s. 1½d. each.

## WONDERFUL INFANT'S MEDICINE.

In these days of drugging infants to sleep when the poor children are suffering from Gripes, Wind, and Colic, it is refreshing to know that THOMAS KEATING, the well-known Chemist, introduces a reliable cure (the relief is almost instant, the child at once ceasing to be troubled), *guaranteed free from any Sedative in any form whatever*—it is emphatically a pure and

**NURSE**

Price 1s. per bottle, of a

THOMAS

**SOOTHER.**

not kept in his stock, or free

LONDON.

## THE GREAT MEDICINE.



It gives instant relief in **HEADACHE, SEA or BILIOUS SICKNESS, CONSTIPATION, INDIGESTION, LASSITUDE, HEARTBURN, and FEVERISH COLDS**; prevents and quickly relieves or cures the worst form of **TYPHUS, SCARLET, and other FEVERS, SMALLPOX, MEASLES, and ERUPTIVE or SKIN COMPLAINTS**, and various other altered conditions of the Blood. It is **THE Cure for CHOLERA.**



The Testimony of Medical Gentlemen and the Professional Press has been unqualified in praise of

# LAMPLOUGH'S PYRETIC SALINE

as possessing most important elements calculated to restore and maintain Health with perfect Vigour of Body and Mind.

It is effervescing and tasteless, and forms a most invigorating, vitalizing, and refreshing beverage.

**Dr. MORGAN.**—"It furnishes the blood with its lost saline constituents."

**Dr. FURLLEY.**—"I found it act as a specific, in my experience and family, in the worst forms of Scarlet Fever, no other medicine being required."

**Dr. S. GIBSON** (formerly Physician to the London Hospital).—"I have been in the habit of using it in private practice for many years. In hot climates it is of special value."

**Dr. SPARKS** (Government Medical Inspector of Emigrants from the port of London) writes.—"I have great pleasure in bearing my cordial testimony to its efficacy in the treatment of many of the ordinary and chronic forms of Gastric Complaints and other forms of Febrile Dyspepsia."

**Dr. J. W. DOWSING.**—"I used it in the treatment of forty-two cases of Yellow Fever, and am happy to state I never lost a single case."

**Dr. W. STEVENS.**—"Since its introduction, the fatal West India Fevers are deprived of their terror."

**Dr. ALEX. MILNE.**—"In searching for the best combination of Salines we alighted on that of Mr. Lamplough. Its utility as a remedy in fevers and as a cooling drink in diseases of children, such as Scarlet Fever, Measles, &c. has been testified to by the leading members of the profession." "I prescribe it also to my patients frequently."—19th May, 1880.

**HIS MAJESTY'S REPRESENTATIVE, the GOVERNOR OF SIERRA LEONE.** In a letter of request for an additional supply of the Pyretic Saline, states:—"It is of great value, and I shall rejoice to hear it is in the hands of all Europeans visiting the tropics."

In Patent Glass-stoppered Bottles, 2s. 6d., 4s. 6d., 11s., and 21s. each.

## LAMPLOUGH'S CONCENTRATED LIME JUICE SYRUP.

From the Fresh Fruit, as imported for the Hospitals; a perfect luxury; forms, with the addition of Pyretic Saline, a most delicious and invigorating beverage, particularly for Total Abstemious, the Delicate, and Invalid; of special service in *Scrophula, Fevers, and Rheumatism*, and a low or altered condition of the system. Most Chemists sell the above with the Pyretic Saline.

In Patent Glass-stoppered Bottles, 2s., and 4s. 6d. each.

## DR. POWEL'S BALSAMIC LOZENGES,

For Coughs, Asthmatic, Bronchial and Consumptive Complaints.

These excellent Lozenges, prepared only by H. LAMPLOUGH, have for many years been found of great service; their occasional use often prevents attacks from colds and inflammation. *Price 1s. 1½d. per Box.*

"Have them in your houses, and forget them not in your travels."

NOTICE MY TRADE MARK AND NAME,

H. LAMPLOUGH, 113, HOLBORN HILL, LONDON. E.C.



# BARBER & COMPANY'S

(THIS SEASON'S GROWTH)

## RICH SIRUPY

## ONFA CONGO,

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE PER POUND.

**A TEA** abounding in Strength and Quality Never Sold in ENGLAND before at the PRICE. "**COMPARE**" it with that SOLD by others at **TWO SHILLINGS**.

*6lbs. sent free by Parcels Post to any Post Town in the United Kingdom for 10s. (compare this with that Advertised at 12s. 3d.), or 2½lbs. for 4s. 3d.*

---

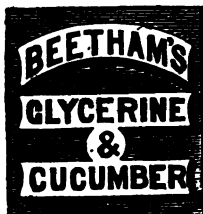
## BARBER AND COMPANY,

274, Regent Circus, Oxford Street, W.

61, Bishopsgate Street, E.C.; The Boro', London Bridge, S.E.; King's Cross, N.; 102, Westbourne Grove, W.; 42, Gt. Titchfield Street, W.; Manchester, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Preston; and 1, Church Street, and Minster Buildings, and London Road, Liverpool.

*Remittances to be crossed "London and Westminster Bank." P.O. Orders payable at London General Post Office.*

---



This sweetly scented Emollient Milk is superior to every other preparation for rendering the Skin

**SOFT, SMOOTH, AND WHITE.**

It entirely removes and prevents all

**ROUGHNESS, REDNESS, SUNBURN, CHAPS,**

And all other blemishes of the Skin caused by

**SUMMER'S HEAT or WINTER'S COLD.**

It keeps the Skin Cool and Refreshed on the Hottest Day in Summer, and Soft and Smooth in the Coldest Winter.

Bottles, 1/, 1/9, 2/6. Of all Chemists and Perfumers. Free for 3d. extra by the Makers.

**M. BEETHAM & SON, CHEMISTS, CHELTENHAM.**

# HERE BELOW

A Novel

BY

JOSEPH ALAN SCOFIELD

'Hope, hallie suster, sweepynge thro' the skie,  
In crowne of goulde and robe of lillie whyte—'

*Chatterton*

*REVISED EDITION*

LONDON

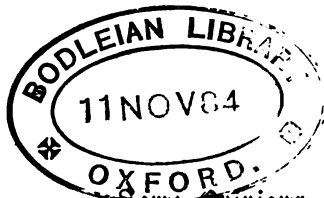
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

NEW YORK: 9 LAFAYETTE PLACE

1884

256.2 813.



### Some Opinions of the Press.

*Society* says :—'A more powerful and clever novel of its kind than *Here Below*, by Joseph Alan Scofield, has not appeared for some considerable time. Viewed from every stand-point, it is a most noteworthy production. It is not so much from any special merit in regard to the plot that Mr. Scofield's book is valuable, but rather from the admirable manner in which the story is told, and from the soundness of its object. . . . *Here Below* is wholesome and fresh from cover to cover, and contains a most excellent moral, cleverly interwoven with an interesting and novel story. At times the author reminds us not a little of Dickens, especially in his descriptive passages, which are, without exception, most powerfully and graphically conceived. Some of Mr. Scofield's creations are as delightful as they are original.'

*The Athenaeum* :—'Temperance people who build their hopes of the future upon the gradual strengthening of self-control amongst the people, might do worse than by making a text-book of *Here Below*, and sowing it broadcast. . . . It is a vigorous onslaught on the vice of intemperance. . . . The story is in parts extremely interesting as a work of fiction, and decidedly clever in the conception of its characters. Spike and his son deserve to be picked out from the rest for particular approval.'

*The Queen* :—'The cause of Temperance has found in Mr. Scofield an advocate who does not injure his cause by too much zeal, or provoke hostility by disregard of the feelings of those whom he tries to persuade. Indeed, in his rather extensive group of well-marked characters, he shows the intemperate apostle of temperance—the man who indulges in unmeasured abuse of the bottle in another sense—in a repulsive light, as a glutton and a bully, and not over-scrupulous in his dealings with other men. Mr. Scofield recognises that alcohol has its uses . . . but at the same time he shows the almost insurmountable obstacles which beset him who, having overpassed the bounds of moderation, would retrace his steps. This is one point of the moral of his fable. The other is that there is little use in denouncing the evils caused by excess, unless we search for its provoking cause.'

*The Morning Post* :—'It says well and clearly all that is to be adduced against a national evil, and the writer's tone is throughout honest and convincing.'

*The Graphic* :—'Mr. Scofield gives plenty of evidence that he possesses considerable talent of his own for fiction. He has brightness and vigour. . . .'

*The Academy* :—'The effect of the whole is undeniably amusing.'

*Vanity Fair* :—'The idea is a bold and novel one.'

*Truth* :—'If you like low life admirably and humorously drawn . . . by all means read *Here Below*.'

*The Standard* :—'Mr. Peevers, the fanatical, self-seeking, and somewhat hypocritical total abstainer, is an admirable type of the bigoted class of men who do more to hinder the cause of rational temperance than all the brewers, distillers, and beer-houses in the kingdom. . . . It is no wonder that the preaching and arguments of such men are "more conducive to resentment and consequent obstinacy than to conversion." They are words of wisdom which Mr. Scofield speaks, when he says, that "if people wish to do away with a large amount of drunkenness in this country they must find a substitute for it". . . .

# HERE BELOW.

---

## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

WITH the day's mist falling heavily, and with half-thawed snow refrozen still beplastering the pavement, it was not a night to dawdle about at the corners of the streets.

Yet there was one person who, interrupting himself in a swift swinging walk, stopped almost every time a crossing offered wider gaps of view to the upward gaze.

His walk was straight, but velocity once arrested, his attitude became unsteady, like his half-closed eyes as they rested on the moon.

'Three quarters of her face brooding in the calm light of eternity,' he muttered, 'and one quarter darkened with the shadow of her monstrous self—one quarter of our life a bright blank of sleep, and three quarters shadowed with the darkness of our waking day.'

He leant backwards against his stick, and so steadied himself.

'Now, am I drunk or not, to talk like that?' he continued thickly; 'I am able to reflect that, when apostrophising the moon or the other orbs of night, I have always had a narrow escape of becoming incapable, but when we dream we sometimes comfort ourselves by saying, "I am asleep, and this is only a dream;" and so, when we are drunk, we sometimes say, "They think I am drunk, but I can see how deluded they are by appearances, and I know that I am not drunk," and yet we are drunk all the while; and so, in the same way—but I forget now where I was. However, the question is—Am I drunk? I don't know.'

Then after further reflection he continued—

'Is the alcohol I have taken too strong for my will, or is my will, still under the control of reason, able to assert, unmistakably, that I am sober? I am going to see. This quarter of the town is well adapted to the experiment.'

He strode off with great swiftness, but with a regularity of pace and a steadiness of carriage that showed he was exerting his will to the one purpose at least of proving that he had still unimpaired physical control over himself.

The quarter, as he said, was well adapted to his purpose. The pavements were wide and the streets straight and far-stretching, so that any one could be seen in the moonlight a long way off.

It is a peculiar quarter of London. In contact with the cream of magnificence on the one side, and with the dregs of squalor on another, it shows signs of the proximity of both things. In its stately squares and its spacious thoroughfares, sleek horses tossing the foam from rattling bits, carriages with coronets on their panels, spurred and cockaded henchmen ambling behind quality on horse-back—these and other such signs point to the cream; in the demure cross streets and back streets, unwashed doorsteps and window-panes, dingy curtains in holes, and rotting blinds twisted or askew, medicine bottles filled with gin, and conveyed down area-steps by the intermediary of work-stained charwomen, beer-cans hung on area railings in readiness for the pot-boy, touzled heads stretched out of bedroom windows above, nodding to touzled heads over the way, unlaced figures leaning round portico-columns below, in wait for the costermonger's barrow or the coal-retailer's wagon—these are particulars which show a tendency towards the dregs.

Three marks, however, stamp the two diversities as being one growth—all is of the same modern design, all palpably new, and yet every part looks to be grown old before its time.

Being in this last respect like the younger ones of those who on this night, as on every night, issued forth to take possession of the stately squares and spacious thoroughfares, the cross streets and back streets which the mounted quality and the cockaded henchmen, the yelling costermonger and the whistling pot-boy had left empty.

They who issued forth sauntered on the pavement with the easy swagger of a happiness which had known no sorrow in the past, and had none to fear in the future, broke fitfully into snatches of convivial and erotic song, and in such determined gaiety of spirit that, when by inadvertence a sigh came up instead of a note, they instantly covered the mistake with a loud burst of laughter, and sometimes with a volley of oaths to more completely reassure each other.

As the midnight warnings of many a clock far and near signalled the instant coming of another day, some of these resolute promoters of gaiety, who had been aiding in the liveliness of other quarters, now began to return in hansom cabs, pealing, like their sisters on foot, with laughter and with song. They seemed to desire that all things animate and inanimate—the passers-by, the moon and stars, the mist, the lamps, the policemen—all should bear witness to their undisturbed enjoyment of the present hour, and their courageous indifference to the morrow as a matter not worth a thought—being, in truth, a thing which happens to everybody every day of his life.

But this seeming abundance of joy found no reflection in the saddened face of the young man who was still striding along so swiftly, nor in the long-drawn sigh, ending in a quick derisive gasp—it could not be called a laugh—with which he started forward into a

half-run, as if smitten with a secret pain, modulating this sudden increase of pace on coming face to face with the policeman, into the cheery stamping of a man suffering from nothing worse than a cold, and the gasp into a sympathising shudder at the inclemency of the night.

'Good-night, sir,' said the policeman, in acknowledgment of this sign of human fellowship in so keen a frost.

'Good-night,' said the other.

He hurried on until he came to the door of a house with uncurtained windows. Fumbling for his latch-key, he curiously and unsteadily eyed certain bits of shavings and straw which littered the place where he was standing, then looking once more on the moonlit sky, he said still somewhat thickly,—

'If I had been a man all this time; if, instead of spasmodic fits of self-denial and labour too severe to last, and therefore too often lapsing into indolence and something worse, I had shown the staying-power of men of less pretension; if I had soared less and plodded more, I might now have been of some help to him in the difficulties that somehow or another seem at length to be overwhelming him. But so far, I am of no use to him or to anybody else; and I know that I am a reproach to myself. But I don't think I am drunk to-night, though.'

Having at length found his key, he put it into the door, remarking, as he did so, with another unsteady look of curious inquiry,—

'I wonder what that litter of straw and shavings means?'

Opening the door and stepping quickly inside, he suddenly drew back as though he had made a mistake, and had entered the wrong house. His foot had encountered nothing but bare boards, and the sound echoed along the passage and up the staircase, and about the rooms above, as if the house was deserted and empty.

In an instant the meaning of the straw and the shavings flashed upon him.

The moving reflection of an ascending light at the end of the passage, and the labouring step and heavy breathing of some one coming up the stairs, however, were signs that he welcomed more than he had ever welcomed them before; and presently a woman, bonneted and shawled, as if only waiting to give the keys up to any one willing to take them, appeared, bearing in her hand a guttering tallow candle stuck in a holder, hastily made out of a strip of deal and three large nails.

'Hush!' she said, pointing to a door on her right.

'They have made a clean sweep here, then, Mrs. Spike?' he whispered.

'Yes,' she whispered back; 'I didn't like to tell you there was a man in possession, and this morning they came and took every stick except a chair I begged for *him*'—and here she again pointed to the door on her right—'and a bit of beddin'.'

'When?'



'Just after you left this morning, Mr. Matthy. He wouldn't send for you, and I didn't know myself whether to send for you or not. But now don't get worritin' over it to-night. Go in and help to cheer him up, poor gen'l'm'n ! and I'll bring you up some supper ; and you musn't get low-spirited, but look at things cheerful, which they'll all come right in time, no doubt.'

'In time, no doubt,' he repeated, as if to himself.

'Come now, Mr. Matthy, don't think about it to-night,' she continued. 'Just go in and sit by the fire, and I'll make you as comfortable as possible. I have fetched one of my chairs for you, and some knives and forks and a plate or two, and a towel, and so on ; so you'll be able to manage till I come in in the morning. But I thought you was never coming home to-night, and they'll think at home I'm lost, which Spike, he's been drinking again all day, and wasn't come in when I went to give them a look an hour ago. We've all got our troubles, Mr. Matthy : you've got *him*, and I've got Spike.'

He said nothing, but marvelled at the cheerful spirit of this daughter of toil and sorrow as she laboured down-stairs again.

---

## CHAPTER II.

THEN opening the door at his side, he entered a room, which, though bare of almost every article of furniture, was neither tenantless nor wholly cheerless.

Before a briskly burning fire, with his feet on the naked hearth, where the fender should have been, sat a large-framed, gaunt old man, with a grand cast of face, in which expression was almost blotted out.

He was listlessly stirring the blazing coals with a piece of half-burnt wood. On the mantelpiece stood another guttering candle, supported in a candlestick similar in construction to the one carried by Mrs. Spike, and lighting up two handleless and cracked mugs, lent for the occasion by that helpful person, and a partly emptied bottle of spirits.

The old man, turning round with a shaking head and a hiccuping voice, exclaimed,—

'Home at last, then, Mat!—home at last, my dear boy ! A poor home this time, Mat, but not for long, my boy—not for long !'

'Never mind, uncle,' said the young man, laying aside his hat and overcoat, and then putting his hand kindly on the old man's shoulder.

'Mind, Mat—mind !' shouted the old man, in a voice which began in hoarse defiance, but quickly ended in a drunken gurgle. 'Mind !—I mind ! *we* mind !—no, my boy, we'll beat 'em yet—beat 'em yet !'

And then he broke into a crowing, hysterical laugh, and stamped his foot and shook his fist defiantly.

'But sit down, my dear—sit down; here is a chair for you. Mrs. Spike fetched it purposely for you; an excellent good woman, Mrs. Spike—a good, worthy soul, Mat; don't let me forget her, Mat, when my affairs are re-arranged; I wish to bear Mrs. Spike in mind—an honest, deserving, good body.'

The young man, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and letting his chin sink on his breast, merely nodded in acquiescence.

'But come, come,' continued the other, 'help yourself, Mat, and join an old fellow in making the best of things for the present.'

With a ready hand Matthew reached out to take the bottle; but glancing at the old man's blotched face and swollen nose and lips and bloodshot eyes, he drew back with a shudder and filled up his mug with water only.

'That's right, Mat!' said the old man, thinking that the younger one had helped himself from the bottle. 'Now, let us make ourselves comfortable. And here comes Mrs. Spike, thoughtful and mindful as ever of all our little wants, with some supper for the dear boy, after his hard day's work.'

And bearing in one hand a plate of meat, and in the other a jug of ale, and under her arm a loaf of bread, Mrs. Spike entered, and set out the young man's supper on the further corner of the chimney-piece.

Telling her to take away the ale for her own refreshment—an order to which Mrs. Spike gave preliminary effect by dexterously withdrawing the measure under her shawl—Matthew stood up, and with his back to the old man, ate from the plate with an apparent zest, which might have been mistaken for hunger, but which was in reality nothing more than a desire to master the fumes that were rising to his head. A copious draught of water was swallowed to the same end.

Mrs. Spike, going up to the old man, said in a soothing voice,—  
'Now don't drink any more to-night, there's a dear good gen'l'm'n; but go to bed and get the trouble off your mind. When things is at their worst, it's a sure sign they're going to take a turn.'

'A turn, Mrs. Spike!' exclaimed the old man, assuming a stiffened posture, although not a steady one. 'A turn! there *will* be a turn!—in the morning!—by the first post! Wait till the morning! Mat, Mrs. Spike, friends, all who are good and true to me in my extremity! and you, Francis, villain, scoundrel, liar, who have jockeyed me and hunted me!—wait till the morning! The morning will bring a turn you little dream of!'

A turn he little dreamt of—such as, if it had been whispered to him, he would have dropped on the hearth at the thought of.

Finding that her remark had thrown him into this paroxysm of rage and defiance, Mrs. Spike whispered Matthew a cheerful good-night, and withdrew.

The old man, unobserved by the younger one, who had still his back towards him, poured out half a mugful of the spirit, and diluting it with half that quantity of water, drank it off without a pause. Then when Matthew, after another but smaller draught of water, sat down, the other cried out in the high-pitched quaver of intoxication,—

‘Come, Mat, my boy, fill up, and we’ll face the night out, until the letter comes; until the letter comes which is to make our fortunes!’

The young man smiled sadly at the mention of a letter. For of late his relative had seemed to look to the post-office for the fulfilment of his dearest hopes. But the post-office had so far failed him.

Letters it had brought him—letters in abundance; but not letters of the sort he was feverishly waiting for: letters from the money-lender, who, having advanced him a part of fifty pounds on a bill at four months, and having carefully tended it until its second renewal, when it had ripened into a goodly fruit of one hundred and fifty pounds, had now, at the end of the period of its last renewal, that is, at the end of a twelvemonth, relieved the acceptor of all further trouble about it, by selling off at half its value the three hundred pounds’ marketable worth of furniture, which had served as security. Letters from persons whose subject or whose style was so unpalatable, that the old man cursed their missives as he read them, and straightway thrust them between the bars. Letters of his own writing, which had missed their aim and came back through the returned-letter office,—of these, so many, that the postman of the beat began to think the old gentleman was seeking to renew acquaintance with the friends of his youth, now that they were all dead and buried.

So, when the old man spoke of a letter coming to put all things right, the younger one smiled sadly and said nothing. His companion, as if reading his thoughts, turned sharply, and exclaimed,—

‘Ah! but this letter will be different from all the others. This letter, Mat, will be the means of restoring me in some measure to the position that is rightly mine, and you too. But when I am dead and gone, Mat, you will need no help from me, you will be a rich man.’

In this there was nothing to excite the young man’s attention; he had heard it too many times of late.

‘When I am dead and gone, Mat, and all my shame is buried with me—’

In this there was enough to make Matthew turn round with a look of inquiry; but, regarding once again in the old man’s face the unseemly marks of that weakness of his which was cause enough for shame, and for the worst shame—the shame of a man who had suffered bright reason to succumb to a gross and growing appetite—he relapsed into his previous attitude of listless indifference.

‘When that takes place, you will be a rich man, Mat. Meanwhile I must live—and as I ought to live—’ and now again he stamped his feet, and threw out his clenched fists in defiance—‘as

I ought to live, in comfort ! And you must live, Mat, and without serving a master, boy ; do you hear ? I shall insist this time on nothing less than a thousand a-year ; and this time I shall take care not to forestall it, Mat ; and I shall allow you something handsome out of it, you rascal ; do you hear ?'

But the other showed no sign of awakened interest.

'When I am dead and buried, and all my shame is buried, with me,' continued the old man, 'then, Mat, you can step forward at last, and then you will be a rich man. Then, instead of a thousand, you will have many thousands a-year ! Ha ! you dog, what do you say to that ?—what do you say to that, eh ?'

Matthew still sat uninterested, striving not to yawn. He was considering what argument would the soonest induce his companion to lie down on the mattress in the corner, and try to sleep.

'But you won't wish your old—but you won't wish the old man dead before his time, Mat, for all that, eh ? I sha'n't stand in your path much longer, Mat. You will be kind to the old man, Mat, while there's a breath in him, eh ?'

Here the tears of intoxication trickled down his puffed and wrinkled cheeks.

'Kind to you, uncle ! Why, if you were gone, I should stand alone, without a single relative by blood or marriage the wide world through !'

'Poor boy ! poor boy ! so he would !'

'Don't talk of dying, uncle ; only rely—' and here Matthew's voice grew as gentle as a woman's—'only rely less on your dangerous friend the bottle, there, and more on your own stout heart ; and then, shoulder to shoulder, we'll fight it through to the end !'

The spirit of this sentiment was so much in accordance with the old man's present mood of defiance and self-assertion, that he instantly sprang to his feet and shouted out,—

'Aha ! shoulder to shoulder we'll meet them ! Do you hear, villain ? And you, his hirelings—all of you !—shoulder to shoulder we'll meet you, and be d—d to you !'

In an instant his face blanched to a deathly whiteness, his eyes rolling up till they looked like a blind man's, and his mouth twitching spasmodically. Swaying to and fro, he might have fallen headlong into the fire, but Matthew caught him in his arms, and carefully assisted him to the mattress on the floor.

'A spasm in the chest, Mat, that's all. I can't have had too much, my boy, can I ?—two of us drinking, and the bottle not empty yet.'

His companion did not think it necessary to mention that he himself had drank nothing out of the bottle, but gently lowered the old man on to the bed, and threw over him such coverings as he could find.

'Good-night, Mat ; and God bless you, my dear boy ! You will be a rich man when I am dead, Mat—'

Matthew put something additional under the pillow, to raise it as

much as possible ; and then, wrapping himself in his overcoat and a railway-rug, he took the old man's vacated chair as being the easier of the only two seats in the room, and prepared himself to think.

'A rich man when I am dead and gone, Mat,' murmured the old man ; 'when I am dead and gone, and all my shame is buried with me.'

Gazing into the fire, and thinking sadly over his own past—a past in which much self-denial and industry had, so far, been rendered abortive by much indolence and folly—Matthew every now and then found the sleeper's closing words working themselves into the woof of his own thoughts ; at which moments he would start up, and rousing himself with a shake, put the fire together, and then, with another shake, fall back into another uneasy train of reflection.

'Have I, all this time,' ran his thoughts, 'while fondly dreaming that I could mingle ambitious toil and idle folly with impunity—have I, all this time, been surely working out for myself meet punishment? Have I, all presumptuously aiming with the highest, and all as grossly wallowing with the lowest—have I— But don't touch that bottle ; throw it away ; some of them have been putting poison in it for a joke— But look !—why, she has drunk some of it, and now I hardly know her ! Her eyes are gone, and she smiles like a skeleton. Well, she always did say her teeth were her own— And there's my Past turned up again ! It looks like me when I was a boy ; that's because I was looking at an old portrait this morning. You often dream of what you see in the day— But now the Past fades into the Future, as it always does, and now I am old and wrinkled, and bent and bald ; and how pale and blear-eyed I am, and my head shakes so ! But drink, they say, ages a man terribly fast. And that is how I shall be remembered, when I am dead and gone—and all my shame is buried with me—no, *his* shame—why not mine? Shame enough in *pretending* at endurance and lofty aims ! O God ! make me better than I have been ! How shattered and blotched and shrunken I look, and my head and limbs shake as with the palsy ! Thank God it fades now, and sleep is coming ! When the struggle is over, and the weary waiting is all past, will death come then as sleep comes now?—steeping the senses in this soft oblivion—this balm of ease—or—'

---

### CHAPTER III.

AND, as it seemed to him, a moment afterwards he started up in what he took for the natural darkness of the night, every limb shaking, and stiffened and cramped with the cold, and with the sharp concussion of the postman's knock sounding in his ear.

Guiding himself by a pencil of light, which entered through the keyhole, he stepped into the passage ; and in the dull glimmer of a

winter's morning, made duller still by a long accumulation of dust on the panes of the fanlight, he went to the letter-box.

The bitter smile which broke out on his face as he read the superscription on the only letter the box contained, softened with pity as he thought of the old man he had left in the room.

'Another blank,' he said.

The printed part of the superscription on the envelope showed that the enclosure was nothing more than a letter *returned by the post-office*.

Going back into the darkened room, with the letter in his hand, he quietly opened the shutters, and then turned to look at the old man.

Looked at the old man, and still looked—with a sudden sinking of the heart, and with a sudden moisture of the palms, and with a faintness creeping over him.

With an effort he ran to the mattress, and stooped down over the pallid figure lying there; felt its temples, placed his hand upon its breast, tried its wrists—all in haste and horror.

It needed but a touch, however, to tell that the earthly machine had stopped for ever.

He recoiled with a deep-drawn sigh.

'I might have been kinder to him,' he thought.

All the kindness he had ever shown the dead man—and it had been shown ungrudgingly and in no spirit of calculation—he would often and often be glad to think of in the time to come. All the neglect he had ever shown him—and this had been shown rarely and only in thoughtlessness—he might often regret but he could never repair.

The kind words he would now have spoken must go unspoken for ever.

Thrusting the letter into an inner pocket of his coat, he ran out of the house, meeting Mrs. Spike in the act of letting herself in by the area-gate. Having made the startled woman comprehend the truth, he himself sped off for the doctor.

This gentleman, leaving the reception of his early patients to his assistant, hurried forth in answer to the summons with his customary speed; which, being always the highest he could attain without running, could not fail to be sufficient now when it was certain to be quite as effective as that of electricity itself in overtaking the life which was the object of it.

The doctor, who had beckoned in a policeman as he entered the house, briefly inspected the stiffened figure on the mattress, and then said to Matthew,—

'Just what I told him to expect with that heart of his, and '—nodding in the direction of the bottle on the chimney-piece—'with that little habit of his.'

'Goin' to have the body removed or left here, sir?' asked the policeman, who was jotting down, from personal knowledge, the name and address of the deceased, as well as the precise time at



which an official air began to be thrown over the case by his own presence there.

'Left here,' replied Matthew.

'Now, if you two gen'l'm'n have got anything to attend to out-of-doors,' observed Mrs. Spike, who, though shedding tears of pity, was too accustomed to death and other sorrow to forget the need of the hour; 'and if the constable will keep watch for ten minutes, I'll go and get help and do what is necessary—poor old gen'l'm'n!'

This was all the help that the morning when it came had brought him.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

AFTER the refreshment of a bath and a breakfast at an hotel with which he was acquainted, it occurred to Matthew that, besides those needs of the hour which Mrs. Spike had undertaken to attend to, there were others which called for his own immediate exertion; and grief and shock notwithstanding, he bent himself to the sorrowful work with all the energy that was in him.

In a couple of hours his task for the time was finished; and then he started off for a street in Bloomsbury.

Arrived there some thirty minutes later, as the clock was striking the hour of noon, he rang the bell of a house which was marked on its brass door-plate as the residence of *Mr. O. G. Chamfer, Architect*; and he was presently admitted into a wide passage which proclaimed, as far as it might through the medium of plaster of Paris, that it pertained to an abode of art.

The garish light of the outside world, stealing through the fan-light of the door and the staircase window, and so clothing itself like a priest in all the colours of the rainbow, solemnly revealed to the startled gaze the countless adornments of the place. These, in their multiplicity, stirred the intruder's imagination with the thought of what might be enshrined within the penetralia of the temple itself.

Here, on a bracket, an overburdened Michael Angelo was seen comparing the plaster of the ceiling with the material in which his own lot was cast. There, under a glass shade, Venus coyly drew attention to the want of clothing which she was pretending to hide. From a lofty perch over the dining-room door, a lugubrious Dante scowled at an irritable Milton on the opposite wall. Supported on a scagliola column, the bust of a wealthy patron of Mr. Chamfer smirked with condescending approval upon an unconcerned Shakespeare, whose contemplative orbs were fixed on the contortions of a Laocöon.

Engravings of celebrated monuments of architectural skill hung everywhere; but the distrust given rise to by a leaning Tower of Pisa was not allayed by a model of the Roman Coliseum, crumbling

in a way that was quite enough to frighten any client from an intended venture in bricks and mortar.

Passing by these numerous accompaniments to the umbrella-stand and the hat-pegs, with the accustomed eye of a frequent visitor, Matthew walked the length of a narrower part of the passage, and opened a white painted door, on which art seemed to have done nothing more than wipe her hands.

The long slip of an apartment which he entered was more like a corridor than a room—was all window on one side, and all shelves and pigeon-holes on the other. Adjoining the window side was a long bench or table, supported at intervals by nests of drawers, and almost covered with drawing-boards, which were propped up at various angles suited to the convenience of the persons for whose use the boards were intended.

The only occupant of this business-like apartment, at the moment of Matthew's entering it, was in the act of removing a pewter measure from his lips.

'Too late, my boy!' exclaimed this person, with a sigh, as he put the measure behind the coal-scuttle. 'Too late!'

He was a waggish-looking gentleman of about Matthew's own age, with a face which, notwithstanding a certain cloudiness in the eyes, and a little over-colouring about the nose, was worth noting for its beauty.

'I waited for you with the most exemplary patience for full three minutes,' he continued, with a nod towards the scuttle. 'At the end of that time I gave in, and no wonder, considering the intellectual operations I had gone through in trying to account for your absence. "Did he," I said, "take more than was good for him last night, and is he now paying the inevitable penalty?" "No," I replied, "he was not further gone than usual, unless I myself was too drunk to observe it. And yet," I continued, "now that I remember me, there certainly was a dead unswerving directness in his walk when he left me,—the unnaturally steady, carefully-balanced progress of a man who believes his only chance of maintaining a character for uprightness is to keep on in a straightforward course; the carriage of one who, knowing that his fall is approaching, yet, still influenced by a noble regard for public decency, desires only to reach his own door-step before finally abandoning himself to the weakness of the hour—"

'Yes, I am rather late this morning,' interrupted Matthew, 'and now I am come only for an hour or two.'

'Hullo!' cried the other. 'Anything wrong, Mat? And, by my troth, now that I have more attentively perused that dial-plate of yours, I do begin to discern a certain something—an ominous corrugation of the eyebrows, and a damned uncomfortable whiteness about the gills—nothing serious occurred, I hope—you're not in trouble?'

'Yes, Jack, in trouble,' said Matthew, seating himself on one of the stools.

'How much for, Mat? I have a good quarter's money in hand still; and, if that will meet the difficulty, or stave it off, why, you needn't look so confoundedly miserable for the present.'

'It is not money, Jack. Worse than that.'

'Worse than money!'

'Yes, Jack—it's death.'

And then he related the story of the night.

His friend listened with sympathising attention; and then, after a thoughtful pause, said,—

'Well, now, the next thing to consider is how to treat you. You must be kept cheerful, and on no account allowed to brood by yourself. The first thing is a little nourishment of a stimulating nature. In this case we have to keep up the system.'

He then opened the door, and called softly down the adjacent staircase for some one of the name of Richard.

---

## CHAPTER V.

IN response to which summons, and heralded by a shuffling, sliding, stumbling noise, intermingled with a sound of stertorous breathing, a face presently looked into the room. It was the face of a boy—but of a boy on whose overhanging forehead, flattened nose, long upper lip, and protruding chin, was stamped the expression of a person accustomed to take things soberly.

The owner of this sedate countenance, after a brief contemplation of what was going on, entered the room, and took up his stand in front of the stove; turning his back on which, he folded his arms over the bib of his apron, and waited to be spoken to.

'Richard,' said Mr. Gurgoyle, who had in the mean time produced from a drawer a large glass bottle, 'I want you to take this,' holding up the bottle, 'to Mr. Harkles, and ask him what his opinion of it is as an outline. If he approves of the general design, request him to have it filled in with that celebrated amber tint of his.'

This direction being completed, Mr. Gurgoyle carefully wrapped the glass outline in an old roll of drawings, and then, with equal care, inserted the latter under Richard's arm.

'These ancient scrolls,' he added, 'will cast over your proceedings the necessary official air, which you can further improve upon by calling at Mr. Cube, the surveyor's, and inquiring of his clerk how he finds himself at this season of the year, and whether he takes sufficient out-of-door exercise, now his employer is out of town.'

To this last injunction Mr. Gurgoyle added a hope that Richard would use expedition, and not stop on the way to make disrespectful remarks to the grooms in the neighbouring mews; in connection with which he might mention, that the coachman at No. 63 had only yesterday sought a private opportunity of informing him that

Richard was in the habit of treating him—the coachman—to more chaff than the economy of his stable called for.

Richard still continued to remain where he was for the present.

'What's this for?' he inquired at length.

'Which?' asked Mr. Gurgoyle.

'This,' replied Richard, tapping the bottle. '*This* ain't an extraordinary occasion, is it?'

A question having reference to an ingenious habit Mr. Gurgoyle had of searching out pretexts for inducing his fellow-ministers in the temple of architecture to leave off work, and join with him in sending out for something to drink.

'It ain't no one's birthday, as I know of,' continued Richard, 'and it ain't a victory, and it ain't Lord Mayor's day, and it ain't the day afore anythink, nor the day after anythink.'

Something whispered, in answer to this, by Mr. Gurgoyle, with a nod towards Matthew, caused Richard to emit a low whistle of surprise, and, leaving the room, to hurry out through the adjoining courtyard with unexpected celerity.

A few minutes after, shouts of anger were heard, and the door of the courtyard bursting open, Richard was seen to rush in with precipitancy, pursued by a flying carriage-brush. Carefully holding the door with one hand, and extemporising a French horn with the other, he sounded a loud flourish of defiance and derision, concluding with a few pointed remarks, indicative of the great want of respect he felt for the party in conversation with him. The violence with which he suddenly slammed to and bolted the door was immediately explained by the sound of an iron pail coming into contact with the panels on the outside. Emitting another flourish of triumphant derision, Richard picked up the carriage brush, and with dexterous aim deposited it on the most inaccessible part of a neighbouring red-tiled roof.

The mischievous humour of boyhood manifested in these pleasantries was not accompanied in Richard by any of its usual signs of mirth or joyousness; it seemed to be showing itself as a complaint which, like many others, was incidental to his period of life, but which, under opportune treatment, was being thrown off at as early a stage, and in as serious a mood as possible. He had the shape and statue of a boy, but his bearing was that of a man,—of a man who had tasted life, and had not found it all that he could have wished it to be.

When he entered the room, it was with an unperturbed countenance, and having produced the bottle from its place of concealment in the roll of drawings, and filled two glasses, which first had to be washed out, he took up his stand with his back to the stove, as before.

'Did you see Mr. Harkles?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyle, setting down his emptied glass.

'No,' replied Richard, abstractedly, spitting into the grate. 'No; but I saw the Young Un.'

Mr. Gurgyle nodded.

'She wants to see you to-night—partic'lar,' continued Richard.

Mr. Gurgyle observed that he would bear it in mind.

'I don't know exac'ly what it's about,' pursued Richard, reflectively.

'I may perhaps gather that in the course of my interview with her,' remarked Mr. Gurgyle.

'I rather fancy,' continued Richard, 'it's about the Old Un; he's on the drink again—'

At this moment a carriage was heard to drive out of the mews, and Richard, growing suddenly silent, rushed out of the room, and seemed to fall headlong down stairs.

'I like that sketch of yours for the Italian summer-house,' remarked Mr. Gurgyle, filling up the two glasses again. 'It's for this wealthy Mr. Vasper, isn't it?—the man who is rebuilding the big house in Northamptonshire?'

'Yes, at Thatchley.'

'Your native place, too?'

'I only know that Thatchley is the place where I was brought up as a youngster.'

'You know the place where this summer-house is going to be put up, then?'

'Quite well. A well known spot about there; called Fir Tree Hill; a prominent object from the windows of the "Hall," and familiar to all travellers along the highroad that separates it from the park. Many is the long afternoon I have spent there among the firs and the beech-trees.'

'What is a summer-house in such a spot intended for?' asked Jack.

'Well, it's simply a whim of the proprietor's, I suppose,' replied Matthew. 'He probably thinks a summer-house up there would be something pretty to look at.'

'Well, old fellow,' said Jack, looking regretfully at the now empty bottle, 'you have made him a beautiful design for it.'

'You saw the end of it in that form,' observed Matthew, 'when I took it into Stopp's room last night.'

With a significance that caused his friend to turn round and look at him, Jack merely remarked,—

'Did I?'

'But, talking of the beautiful,' continued Mr. Gurgyle a moment afterwards, 'what is architectural beauty compared with the beauty of a woman?'

Matthew again turned to look at his friend, and this time he continued to look at him.

'If it was Jack Gurgyle who said that,' he remarked, after a pause, 'I should like to know what has happened to him.'

'It *was* Jack Gurgyle who said that, and this is what has happened to him: an hour ago he saw the most beautiful woman he ever saw in his life.'

'This is interesting in you, Jack; describe her.'

'Age, about twenty-one or two; height—I can't give it exactly, but there was perfect proportion throughout: such a shape; such hands; and such a pose of the head—I can see it now, the chin the nose, the hair so daintily twisted up behind; the throat; all that I could put on paper easily; but the mouth and eyes—I should fail there. Heaven and earth, what a smile!—a slight touch in the corners of the mouth, and the droop of the eyelids of—I don't know what; voluptuous is not the word, it's too coarse—'

'Suppose such a woman was your wife, Jack?'

'Suppose life a dream! I should be such a woman's slave!'

'But your bachelor's pipe and glass whenever, and what is more, wherever you please!'

'What should I want with such sordid pleasures then?' asked Mr. Gurgyle, draining the last dregs of 'Harkles' bitter' out of the glass before him, however, with considerable relish. 'My life would be one great flood of passion; a broad, deep river of unutterable joy, growing broader and deeper until it reached—'

'The end,' completed Matthew. 'But where did you see this lady, Jack?'

'In this very house, turning to go up-stairs. Looked as though she lived here, or was staying here—a visitor, perhaps.'

'Why, Jack!—my dear fellow, what have you been talking about? Why, didn't you tell me at first where you had seen her? You ought not to have been telling me all this. My dear fellow, there is no visitor stopping here. The lady you saw was Chamfer's—niece.'

'Married?'

'No.'

'Engaged?'

'No.'

'Anyone contemplated?'

After hesitation, Matthew answered,—

'I can't say.'

'I hope not, Mat.'

'Why, Jack?'

'Because I am destined to love that girl—madly.'

'Lor'!' exclaimed Matthew.

And Mr. Gurgyle brandished a T square aloft as though it was a sword, and as though, in pursuance of such a love, he was capable of high deeds.

## CHAPTER VI.

HERE the door was opened, and Richard looked in to observe, with a neighbourly air of imparting the news of the day,—

'The Two Coves have just come in—if you want to see them.'

Richard had scarcely been heard to fall down-stairs again, when



a message came through a speaking tube requesting that, if Mr. Bernock was come, he would at once speak to Mr. Chamfer.

Going out to obey this summons, and tapping at a door jealously covered by an outer one cased in crimson cloth, and studded over with brass-headed nails, Matthew entered a chamber to which the corridor, adorned as it was, seemed a too sudden approach. Such a shrine a new-comer would have been better prepared for after a few introductory ante-chambers; but here he found himself face to face with Architecture herself before he had thought of what to say to her. Pictures, models, mouldings, carvings, plans, sections, elevations, met the eye at every turn; all illustrating undertakings of such splendour and magnitude, that a client coming to give instructions for anything less than a cathedral or a palace could hardly help feeling ashamed of himself.

Of the two persons present in this chamber, one was Mr. Chamfer. If nature had destined Mr. Chamfer for anything unusual—to be the creator, for instance, of that new style of architecture which, it is considered, ought to be one of the typical marks of this present remarkable age—she had not labelled his countenance with her intention; nor had Mr. Chamfer himself done anything to discover the secret. If he revealed in his appearance any design in this life at all, it was to be taken for a person of uncommon respectability and gravity. The arrangement of his hair, the fashion of his garments, the manner of his movements, all seemed to disclaim with mild indignation the slightest taint of impropriety or vivacity. An unsmiling mouth, expressive, if of anything, of discontent; and a downcast eye, expressive of nothing at all, lent their aid towards this disavowal; and a stiff and high shirt collar, imparting to his neck the action of an automaton, were not wanting in the same direction.

It was not an infrequent thing for those who knew Mr. Chamfer to be confronted with the question—why had he chosen architecture as his path in life? His admirers said, because, unquestionably, he had a gift for it; to which his enemies sneeringly rejoined that they supposed, then, it was with that as with everything else which came into the hands of a Chamfer—the owner kept it to himself.

But the real origin of Mr. Chamfer's choice of a profession, tracked back to its earliest source, was as follows:—

He had been sent to a school where very little indeed was taught, but anything on earth might be paid for. Amongst other things suggested in the school prospectus as genteel items for a school bill, was scale drawing. This being subscribed for, Master Chamfer had now and then handed him to copy, in the course of his academical training, sundry drawings which were understood to be more or less connected with architecture. Having passed through a lengthened series of four-panel doors, Doric porticos, Ionic capitals, and innumerable other examples of art, equally free from the florid, and therefore equally easy to be copied, Master Chamfer

finished up his last 'half' by choosing for his 'Christmas piece' the framework of a floor consisting of several parallel lengths of joists, coloured orange, resting on four lengths of brickwork coloured vermilion; being influenced in this choice of a subject by the prudent consideration that, in a design of this sort, he might confidently rely on the aid of his drawing pens and his squares.

This 'slight specimen of his progress'—as it was modestly termed in the letter he had given him to copy out and address to his parents, was shown to an architectural acquaintance of the Chamfers; and this gentleman, happening just then to have a vacancy in his office for a pupil whose parents would not consider three hundred pounds paid down too much for the youth being allowed the privilege of picking up what he could of his own accord in the course of a three years' apprenticeship, discovered in the drawing in question indications of a remarkable aptitude for the art which Michael Angelo and Christopher Wren had helped to make illustrious.

And to this fact it was that architecture owed the enlistment of Mr. Chamfer amongst her followers.

So long as the work was of a kind which called for nothing more than the accurate use of his squares and other instruments, he made creditable progress. Indeed, for his proficiency in work of this sort, the occupant of the next stool to his own, old Chipples, paid him many compliments.

Mr. Chipples, it should be noticed, was an elderly and somewhat infirm draughtsman who, being kept on merely out of charity, was paid something less than half what he was actually worth to his employer, and who in consequence was frequently glad to negotiate with Mr. Chamfer for the loan of half-a-crown; advances to that amount, it may be observed, being readily attainable from Mr. Chamfer, at a moderate weekly interest.

Leading up to such a negotiation, Mr. Chipples would declare that for uniformity in the thickness of stroke, accuracy of joining his lines at the angles, and beauty of printing and writing, young Mr. Chamfer had not his equal. But when it came to what is known as freehand drawing, the young draughtsman found himself at a standstill. Pressing need, however, on the part of Mr. Chipples for an immediate advance of the rather serious sum of two half-crowns instead of one brought with it consolation for young Chamfer. The elderly draughtsman pointed out that the most famous architects the world has ever produced owed eminence to their creative genius; now, as Mr. Chipples said, experience taught us that we must by no means expect the creative faculty to be accompanied, in every case, by manual dexterity in the use of the pencil. Let Mr. Chamfer cultivate the creative faculty, and when he had bought a practice, he would find plenty of ordinary draughtsmen ready, for a moderate salary, to perform the drudgery of reducing his ideas to shape on paper.

But young Mr. Chamfer found it less easy to produce an idea than half-a-crown. Here again entanglement in the affairs of Mr. Chipples saved the distressed apprentice from despondency. Some architects who are somewhat deficient in the creative faculty, said in effect Mr. Chipples, while writing out and handing to Chamfer an I O U, excel in critical ability. Possessed of an extensive knowledge of the styles, they are able to perceive in the works of others, not only nearly all the beauties which the latter can perceive, but very many defects which the latter cannot detect even when pointed out to them. Acquire a critical knowledge of your art, and you will then be in a position to select from the work submitted to you by the draughtsman in your employment all that which is good, and to reject all that which is bad. Out of the abundance of their indiscriminating invention, *your* cultivated understanding will take what will be available for your own purposes.

Following the direction of these remarks, young Mr. Chamfer thenceforth applied himself to the purchase of books, engravings, photographs, models, plaster casts, in short, of everything which, obtainable at a small cost, would assist him in mastering the characteristic details by which the several styles of architecture are most easily distinguished. The accumulation of knowledge of this sort he found was painful, but he succeeded in storing his memory with many useful fragments. From one annual holiday spent in Normandy, another in Belgium, and a third in Paris and its environs, he was understood to have derived large benefit. But though he was thus enabled to distinguish between the different styles as he encountered them, he still found considerable difficulty in discriminating between the merits of these styles, or between the merits of different specimens of one style.

'To do this,' said Mr. Chipples, mortgaging a portion of his next month's salary, 'it was necessary to learn the first principles of the art, the eternal and immutable laws of beauty.'

Mr. Chipples did not particularise these laws, but said generally they were to be acquired by constant reading.

Young Chamfer forthwith purchased several more books, and did his best to understand them. He commenced also to read the æsthetic articles appearing weekly in an architectural publication to which he subscribed. It cannot be said, however, that his studies were attended with the success he desired. If, for instance, he endeavoured to put into practice the lessons which these books had taught him, by forming an independent judgment of the merits of some well-known structure, he generally found, on reference to the work in which this structure was criticised, that his own conclusion was the opposite of what it should have been. If, after anxious deliberation, he decided that an edifice in question was a model of excellence, he would be surprised to find it described by a recognised authority as being well known to be one of the most ludicrous instances of architectural incapacity that ever out-

raged good taste. Another erection, in which he fancied he had detected innumerable violations of the eternal and the immutable, he would be astonished to discover, on reference, was admitted on all sides to be one of the very few perfect specimens of art at present known to exist.

But, whatever might be his natural inaptitude for the profession he had chosen, he reflected that the pecuniary resources at his command should avail him something; otherwise, in what had he the advantage over those unfortunate pupils who had nothing but their talents to rely on?

Strengthened with this reflection, he successfully represented to his father the advisability of furnishing him with the means of passing a period of six months or so in Italy. There he bought more engravings, more photographs, more plaster casts. Confining himself to the chaster specimens of his art, by which term, in his vocabulary, designs easiest of representation on paper were designated, he even attempted to sketch something of what he saw.

In this, however, that old inaptness of the eye and hand continued to baffle him in all cases except one, the case of a knocker. 'A little thing I sketched in Italy,' he would subsequently observe to his clients in England: 'the knocker on the door of the Palazzo Vermicellini: it struck me as being rather remarkable.' And so, indeed, it struck Mr. Chamfer's clients, as being also, in their opinion, more unlike a knocker than anything on the face of the earth. Bearing no visible affinity to any known style, it might rightly be regarded as belonging as much to one style as to another, so that in most of his designs where an outside door appeared, Mr. Chamfer introduced this knocker without much incongruity.

Returning from Italy a travelled and, as he now began to believe, an erudite architect, young Chamfer purchased his old master's practice, and with it Mr. Chipples, whom he allowed to remain; but only out of charity, and for that reason making a further reduction in that gentleman's salary; so Mr. Chipples might now reasonably expect that, by continuing to be a deserving object of charity, he would come in the course of time, if he lived long enough, to get nothing at all for his services.

The other person was Mr. Chamfer's chief clerk, Mr. Stopp. This gentleman had, at the first glance, the appearance of being much younger than Mr. Chamfer, an effect for the most part owing to a youthfulness in the fashion of his dress and the wearing of his hair. There was also a certain jaded look about his countenance, which, as being frequently the token of late hours, raised a false expectation of there being in him something sociable. The easy approach, however, which this and the apparently slight number of his years invited, received, on a nearer approach, a sudden check. A touch of frost about the temples and the under side of the

whiskers became discernible, and the air of unwholesome dissipation changed to one simply of unwholesome drudging. The eye was observed only with difficulty, being generally turned away from the person its owner was addressing. A peculiarity of this organ was that it seemed contemplative of things only, not of persons. There was also in it a certain indication of sullen sensuality, which was in harmony with the bolster form of the lips.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

'You were not here, Mr. Bernock, when I asked for the sketch of Mr. Vasper's summer-house this morning,' remarked the principal of the establishment, overcoming the stiffness of his collar to an extent which enabled him to take in with the corner of his eye a portion of Matthew's dress.

'No, sir, I was detained at home by an occurrence of—a very'—he was going to say painful, but observing the expression of their countenances, he added—'unusual character.'

'In connection with that relative of yours again, I suppose,' remarked Mr. Chamfer, with as near an approach to a smile of incredulity as was consistent with his character for strict propriety.

'That,' observed Mr. Stopp, after a momentary inspection of his superior's countenance, 'has been the substance of the excuse offered by Mr. Bernock on three previous occasions of being absent, within something less than three months.'

'It's too bad,' remonstrated Mr. Chamfer, the weak notes of his treble voice quavering with gentle indignation.

'Such an excuse should not, I think, be offered again,' added Mr. Stopp, taking a cold survey of Matthew's boots.

'It will not,' rejoined Matthew. 'As regards the sketch for the summer-house, Mr. Chamfer, I left it on Mr. Stopp's table last night, after finishing it with some difficulty by the time you mentioned.'

'Mr. Stopp must have had a great deal of trouble with it, I think, for the lines seem to me to be nearly all his. I certainly should not have entrusted it into your hands but for the great pressure under which Mr. Stopp and I are working at present.'

With which announcement Mr. Chamfer was again yielding himself to the pressure of work by commencing to point out where, in his opinion, Matthew had shown the most extraordinary misapprehension of the nature of his subject, when the door opening from the mews was swung violently on its hinges, and a young man of some twenty years or so strode across the back court, his progress into the back office being signalled by the loud click of two locks. In a few moments afterwards he stood in the presence of Mr. Chamfer himself, with a flushed face and a heaving chest. He

seemed to have reluctantly checked himself in an exciting race, upon which he desired to be started again with all convenient despatch.

'I took your note, sir, to Mr. Vasper's house,' he began, in tones of the most urgent haste.

'I wish, Skimflight,' interrupted Mr. Chamfer, 'you wouldn't rush into my presence like a mad bull. Well?'

'He was just gone out,' answered Skimflight, with more controlled fervour. 'I followed him, on the butler's direction, to Bond Street, from there to Grosvenor Square, from there to Curzon Street, from there to Whitehall, and from there to his club.'

Mr. Chamfer looked as much aghast with horror as a man of decorous character might.

Mr. Stopp, interpreting this look to Skimflight, and seeming to address himself to the lowest button of the latter's waistcoat, said, 'A very uncalled-for display of energy, Mr. Skimflight. You should confine yourself to your instructions.'

'The butler said Mr. Vasper was going to leave town to-night for Northamptonshire,' rejoined Skimflight, in justification.

'Well?' inquired Mr. Chamfer, whom this last remark seemed to have checked in the utterance of something more indignant.

'Mr. Vasper said he would call and look at the plans here, at one o'clock.'

'In five minutes' time,' observed Mr. Chamfer to his chief clerk after consulting his watch. Then turning the side of his face slightly in the direction of Skimflight, he continued to the latter, 'And now you had better try and make up for lost time with those tracings; and you will please to remember in future, that a gentleman of Mr. Vasper's position is not to be hunted about like a thief.'

With this acknowledgment of his services, Mr. Skimflight retired much cooled.

'I am glad,' said Mr. Chamfer, when the door was closed, 'that the fellow persisted in finding him; for when he leaves town it will be for the whole hunting season, and if he had gone away without approving of these plans, he would have altered his mind before I had had another opportunity of submitting them. He never tells you when he is going or coming, and he is always changing his mind.'

'Mr. Skimflight's over-display of energy,' observed Mr. Stopp in tones of mincing precision, and yielding to a sudden interest in the left sleeve of his own coat, 'has accidentally proved of service. But,' he continued, again turning his attention to the lower part of Matthew's legs, 'the credit is due, I apprehend, not to him, but to the circumstances of the case.'

'It is only fair to Mr. Skimflight to mention,' interposed Matthew, 'that he has more than once shown himself aware of Mr. Vasper's present intention to spend the whole hunting season in Northamptonshire, and of Mr. Chamfer's desire to get these plans approved of without delay.'

Mr. Chamfer, who had begun to turn over the leaves of a richly bound book of architectural designs, interrupted him by saying,—

‘I want you to make a coloured sketch for a bell turret, in time for the country post this evening. It should be something like this,’ pointing to one of the designs; ‘not a slavish copy, as if the office was incapable of an original conception; the vane may be slightly perforated, and the edges of the posts reduced with stopped chamfers;—otherwise,’ he added, after a pause, ‘adhere to the design.’

Matthew was preparing to take the book away with him.

‘I won’t have it taken away to be dog’s-eared and tossed about in the back office!’ exclaimed Mr. Chamfer. ‘You can do it here. I sha’n’t require the room myself to-day.’

Here a loud knocking and ringing being heard, he exclaimed nervously, ‘There is Mr. Vasper!’ and put his hand on the handle of the door behind Matthew, leading into the front room. Mr. Stopp rose as if to accompany him. ‘No, you need not come, Stopp,’ said Mr. Chamfer, nervously waving him back; ‘but,’ he added, as though an unexpected thought had flashed upon him, ‘in case I *should* want your assistance, you had better not leave this room.’

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. CHAMFER, passing through the narrowest aperture that was requisite for the passage of his body, rather slipping round the edge of the door than walking through the doorway, shut himself in with his client, as if with a choice secret that had to be kept very dark indeed.

Presently he reappeared, with the same nervous anxiety as to the door.

‘He wants to know the probable cost of the summer-house,’ he whispered to Mr. Stopp. ‘Give it me in round numbers.’

‘About fourteen hundred pounds,’ replied Mr. Curdle, examining a picture visible over his employer’s left shoulder.

Mr. Chamfer again shut himself in with his secret, coming back again almost immediately to ask,—

‘What would the floor in encaustic tiles cost?’

A rapid calculation made by the chief draughtsman was snatched up and made off with by his employer in silent haste.

Emerging once more, but this time failing to close the door behind him, he inquired,—

‘What woodwork did we propose—pitch-pine or oak?’

Mr. Stopp, gazing with far-off vision at the door, slowly threatening, as it turned on its hinges, to reveal the carefully-guarded secret within, seemed to ponder the question.

‘That,’ he at length observed, in a voice much raised beyond its previous pitch, ‘is a question which involves another one of cost.’

'Is that you, Stopp?' inquired a soft, drawling voice from the front room. 'I wish you would come in here; I can't get much out of Chamfer.'

Mr. Stopp appeared much astonished that he should have been heard in the other room, but moved as if to comply with the wish so unexpectedly expressed.

Mr. Chamfer nervously motioned him to stop.

The chief clerk paused, and contemplated the place where, if Mr. Chamfer had been out-of-doors, the crown of the latter's hat would have been.

'Mind,' whispered Mr. Chamfer, in fluttering perplexity, 'don't tell him anything—tell him you don't know—they all try to draw out information apart from the principal.'

With which injunction he led the way into the other room, the chief clerk looking carefully to the closing of the door this time himself.

A few minutes after, Mr. Chamfer coming in again and applying his mouth to a speaking-tube, said,—'Tell Mr. Gurgoyle to bring in the drawings of Mr. Vasper's model farm;' and then hastened back to check further self-advancement on the part of his chief clerk.

In another instant Mr. Gurgoyle entered, with a roll of drawings in his hand. Touching his friend on the shoulder with these, he whispered, 'If Matthew Bernock, formerly of Thatchley, Northamptonshire, will keep his ears open, he will hear something to his advantage.'

After this remark, it was not surprising that Mr. Gurgoyle, notwithstanding much seeming care about closing the door behind him, should leave it open.

'Ah!' said the soft, drawling voice, 'these are the designs for the model farm—but what is this? Why, Chamfer, this is the very thing for the summer-house! Compared with that poor thing you have just shown me, this is exquisite! What you showed me was more like a vestry-hall than a summer-house. This is perfect!—what is it?'

'I never saw it before,' said Mr. Chamfer. 'It must have been slipped into this roll by accident, Gurgoyle!'

Mr. Gurgoyle was not heard to negative this suggestion.

'But what is it?' repeated the soft voice.

'It is a tracing, sir,' replied Mr. Gurgoyle, in tones of elaborate distinctness, 'which I made, for my own use, of a design prepared by Mr. Bernock, a draughtsman in this office, for the summer-house you are proposing to build; of that gentleman's design,' continued Mr. Gurgoyle, with growing elaboration of delivery, 'before'—here Mr. Gurgoyle seemed to pause, as if to make quite sure that he was making himself understood—'before it was altered by Mr. Stopp.'

'Mr. Gurgoyle, now that it occurs to me,' observed Mr. Chamfer, 'that bill of quantities has not been sent in yet; be so good as to go round and inquire about it.'



Mr. Gurgyle was heard to leave the room, and the soft voice was at the same time heard to remark,—

‘You must look to your laurels, Chamfer, or this Mr. Bernock—a name I know by the way—will supplant you.’

‘He is as likely to supplant yourself, sir,’ rejoined the architect.

‘Well, I must go now. As to the staircase, call upon me, with Stopp, in half-an-hour’s time from this, and I will show you what I want in a new book my bookseller has just sent me. As to the summer-house, this design of Mr.—what is the name of this buried genius, Chamfer?—Mr. Bernock?—well, that is what I want.’

‘Stopp!’ exclaimed Mr. Chamfer in astonishment when the owner of the soft voice had been attended to the door.

‘It is impossible that this design can be carried out as it is,’ responded Mr. Stopp.

‘It is florid in the extreme,’ said Mr. Chamfer.

‘Tawdry,’ added Mr. Stopp.

‘Utterly opposed to the chaste,’ commented Mr. Chamfer.

‘Meretricious in the last degree,’ observed Mr. Stopp.

‘Not a legitimate feature in it,’ resumed Mr. Chamfer.

‘I suppose it must be altered?’ inquired Mr. Stopp.

‘Oh, certainly,’ replied Mr. Chamfer. ‘It would be absurd to suppose that a client is to follow his own taste in such a matter. It is for me, as his professional adviser, to teach him. Where ought I to alter it, Stopp?’

‘In a matter of critical revision like this,’ replied Stopp, ‘I should rather listen to your own refined judgment.’

‘That chimney might be lowered a few inches,’ observed Mr. Chamfer.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Stopp.

‘Or raised a few inches,’ suggested Mr. Chamfer.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Stopp.

‘This staircase might start the other way.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Stopp.

‘And the position of the scraper requires to be reconsidered.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Stopp.

‘You don’t suggest much yourself, Stopp.’

‘The Vermicellini knocker might perhaps be introduced with effect,’ submitted Mr. Stopp, with deference.

Embracing a novelty in his scheme of revision with all the liberality of true genius, Mr. Chamfer said,—

‘Perhaps it might. Otherwise,’ he added, after waiting in vain for any further suggestion from Mr. Stopp, ‘let the design remain as it is.’

Here Matthew was startled by the door, which Mr. Gurgyle had left ajar, being brought into sudden concussion with its frame, as though the aperture had not until then been observed. The other door, however, being still open, he heard Mr. Chamfer call out in the passage as he soon after left with Mr. Stopp,—

'I am going out; don't keep the lunch; do you hear?'

To which a woman, in a rich voice, answered,—

'Yes.'

'You will not go out until I return?'

The rich voice answered,—

'No.'

'You had better occupy yourself with last week's house accounts.'

No response.

'Do you hear what I say?'

'Yes,' replied the voice.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE coloured sketch was almost finished, when it occurred to Matthew that he was sitting in an uncomfortable draught. He accordingly closed the door into the corridor, and, not to increase the temperature, opened the other,—the one which communicated with the room in front, and had been slammed to so suddenly.

He had hardly taken his seat again when another door was opened, and he heard the rustling sound of a lady's dress in the next room. Turning round, he saw the lady move listlessly up to a pier-glass, and leaning her arms on the mantelpiece, fall to looking at herself. More, however, at what she had on than at herself, as it struck Matthew; though she herself was choice of her type; a type which, to some, perhaps, would seem somewhat—but, as Mr. Gurgyle had said—voluptuous was not the word. That word might perhaps be used in describing her when her present age was doubled. So far, her beauty showed all the delicacy of youth. But what was as noticeable as her beauty, was its blank inanimation; the drooping mouth and the uninterested gaze of one who had found nothing to do here below, or who was discontented with what had come to her hands to do.

Suddenly her eyes, reflected in the glass, met Matthew's, and a magical change came over her. Her soul shone out in every line of her countenance, and her whole frame seemed to quicken, as with a new burst of life.

She moved swiftly towards him, and sinking down on a low chair, and resting her arms on the table he was working at, murmured in the same rich voice which had answered Mr. Chamfer, but with a tremor in it now of suddenly awakened pleasure,—

'This is unexpected! How long have you been sitting here?'

'Since your uncle went out last. Have you finished your accounts?'

'Oh yes!' she sighed.

'Are you so very weary, then?'

'Sick to death! It's too cruel of uncle to keep me shut up in

this way! Nothing but looking after the servants, and adding up the house books, and listening to his complaints.'

'By the way, in all the long time we have known each other, you have never told me how you came into this position with regard to your uncle. Was it your own choice?'

'Oh no! I knew I should be unhappy here. You see, I was unfortunate in my parents.'

The quaintness of this remark caused Matthew to look round to see if she were smiling; but observing that she wore an air of unmoved gravity, he said,—

'My question was a thoughtless one. Don't speak of your parents if it pains you.'

'Oh, I know nothing about them,' she said. 'One of my earliest impressions was that I must never ask questions about them.'

'And so the poor girl never had a home?'

'Oh yes; when Kate and I lived with Aunt Skimflight—that's Lenny's mamma, you know—at Northampton. But aunt married a second time, and became Mrs. Pariby, and then Kate and I were sent to school in France. Such a long weary six years, only brightened by a visit now and then from aunt! How dear aunt used to cry when she came to see us! But she dare not take us away, because her husband said he couldn't be bothered with us. So there we stopped until we were sixteen. Then grandpa took Kate and me to live with him at the "Sheaf," and Kate began to keep grandpa's house for him; though that was as much my duty as hers. But it always seemed natural for everything to fall on Kate. Well, all went well for four years; but then grandpa began to get tipsy every day, and as he got worse and worse, Kate said the "Sheaf," was no place for me, and that I must be put somewhere else, and this seemed the only place for me.'

'But couldn't you have gone back to your aunt's? I have heard Skimflight say his stepfather has been dead some few years now.'

'Yes, but Lenny—or Leonard, as I must call him in future, as uncle says I must leave off calling him Lenny, now that he is going to be "articled" here—was at home then, and Kate said that he was growing up now, and that as he was becoming so unsteady, it would never do for us to fall in love with each other. Did you ever hear of any one so old-fashioned? And Lenny is only nineteen now, and I am nearly twenty-one.'

'And so, then, it was to avoid him that you were sent here?'

'Well, just then Aunt Chamfer died, and uncle said he did not like trusting to strangers, and I was become a pretty good housekeeper, and I had better come and keep house for him.'

'The result being that you can't make yourself happy?'

'He keeps me shut up so much!'

'But he has company sometimes, I think. Why not encourage some of his friends to call on you on your own account?'

'Oh! but his friends are all such odd people—so uncomfortable, and they make me so uncomfortable. It always makes me nervous enough to prepare for giving a dinner-party; and then, when they come and sit so silent, and look so gloomy, I feel sure they are dissatisfied with what has been ordered, or offended at some omission or slip of mine; but sometimes I think they are awed by uncle's stories about the titled people he dines with when he goes on his professional visits into the country. Once I tried to make them more cheerful by singing a merry French song—a dashing, rattling, sparkling snatch of music—nothing, absolutely nothing, in the words, you know, but the most *delightful* air! Listen!' and in a subdued voice she ran through the first verse. 'Well, when I had finished, and turned round, the men coughed, and the women looked very solemn. I was shocked to think that perhaps they did not know a word of what I had been singing, and that they took it for something very wicked.'

'Oh! they would never suppose you would sing anything improper.'

'I don't know; but one married lady said she hoped they would not succeed in introducing French morals into this country; and uncle, who of course knew what I had been singing, seemed to support her by saying that the French school of music was wanting in severity.'

'Poor Pattie! she never attempted a French song in that company again,' said Matthew.

Going on with the colouring, he heard her utter something between a sigh and a laugh.

'Another sigh?' he whispered.

'I shall run away,' she said.

'Where will you run to?'

'I shall make Kate take me in at the "Sheaf." It's grandpa's; and I have a right to go there if I am not happy anywhere else.'

'But would you be happier there?'

'I shouldn't be so dull as I am here at any rate; and you could come and see grandpa whenever you pleased.'

Here she laughed outright.

Matthew, instead of responding with one of the replies which such a challenge naturally provoked, seemed either to be framing something elaborate or else to be embarrassed. Thinking it was the latter, Pattie quickly came to his rescue with the remark,—

'Very odd that you should never have been to grandpa's yet?'

'Odder still that I am going there this very night. I have an appointment there.'

'Indeed! But Kate has told me one of uncle's draughtsmen goes there. She says they call him Jack.'

## CHAPTER X.

'THE gentleman I am going to meet to-night,' said Matthew, 'is not often at the "Sheaf," I believe. The gentleman you mean goes there rather too often, I fear. His name is Jack Gurgoyle. I introduced him into your uncle's office about a twelvemonth ago; and soon after that he appears to have discovered your grandfather's house. You probably saw him this morning—at least, from what he says, I think he saw you.'

'Ah! yes. A very handsome young man.'

'No doubt; a very handsome fellow! But something more than that—a very excellent fellow. All he wants is something to steady him; something to make him concentrate and sustain his energies. A wife, for instance, might in his case be the saving of a fine nature. Now that it occurs to me, Pattie, do you think you could find *your* happiness in such a task?'

'If it were for some one who loved me very dearly.'

'But, suppose that at first he were able to provide only a small home for you; that, being unable to return the hospitality of such friends as he would like you to associate with, he were obliged to ask you to make him almost your sole companion until he grew richer; and suppose you had until then to stop in the same place, and in the same house nearly all the year round, wouldn't there be as much tediousness and sickening languor in that life as in this one which you are now leading?'

She shook her head, with a smile, but without looking up.

'You think not if his gentleness and his efforts to provide for your comfort never changed,' he continued. 'Now, do you know, Pattie, I think I know some one who would be all—nearly all, let us say—to you that you would look for in a husband.'

She replied still with a smile only.

'He is by no means free from undesirable qualities. He is wanting in application: the incentive of adding to your comfort would be the remedy for that. He is too much given to lounge about with a cigar anywhere but over his own hearth: the loadstone of your love would cure him of that. Chiefly, instead of advancing in that self-culture which is beyond the culture of books or of professors—the culture of the better man within him—he is going backward, I fear.'

If she had looked up now she would have seen that he was talking as if to himself, with his eyes not on her, but on the ceiling.

'It would be here,' he went on, 'that the woman who loved him would find a real woman's task. And what truer woman's mission is there than to impart to husband and to sons some of her own gentleness?—to soften the savageness to which men left by themselves show an instinctive tendency? What is there admirable in that which we men regard as the superior graces of a woman's

exterior if she does not so act as to make them appear the embodiment of the superior graces of her mind and heart? To wed these superior graces of her mind and heart to the stronger energy and more lasting endurance of the man is her most alluring, if not her highest mission.'

Pattie assented with another smile—and waited.

'There is, I know,' he continued, 'a good deal talked and written by certain ladies about Woman's Mission: to the effect, I think, that it lies in—amongst other things—the wily encounters of the law courts, the fierce struggles of the hustings and of the Parliamentary prize-ring, the brain-exhausting drudgery of the counting-house stool, and so forth; though I don't think these ladies claim the soldier's part in, say, the slushy snow and mud, deepening as the hours wear on in the trenches of a winter encampment; nor, I believe, do they approve of women being permitted, for instance, to pull swede-turnips from dawn to eve, with a hoar-frost thick on the leaves which have to be grasped, or to bend aching backs to still more prostrating work under a burning sun in August. Undoubtedly woman's occupation has been capable of extension; but she will do well, I think, to push out only into that kind of work in which her co-operation with man tends to soften or elevate his mind, and to carefully hold back from pursuits in which, on the contrary, men are likely to degrade her nature by rendering it, in contact, as rough and as hard as their own.'

Another smile from Pattie.

'Further,' he pursued, 'a jealous desire to be the one object of a woman's love is amongst our strongest passions; rightly acted upon by women this ugly passion becomes productive of the energy which accomplishes the work of the world. The women who feel their power in rousing and influencing this energy don't talk on platforms about woman's rights. They know that the achievements of this life are as much due to them as to us, their servants.'

All this still appeared to be addressed to the ceiling, while Pattie, still smiling in admiration of such pretty sentiments, seemed to be waiting for something else.

'For a woman playing such a part in his life, the efforts, to make her happy in body and mind, of the man I am talking of would be unceasing,' added Matthew. 'Now, Pattie, with such a husband as I have been trying to describe, do you think you could be happy?'

She now had her face buried in her hands, and he waited, and then all he heard was a half-whispered,—

'I could be happy anywhere with you.'

She never thought but that he was talking of himself, and he was thinking all the time of his friend Jack Gurgoyle.

## CHAPTER XI.

OVERCOME with confusion, Matthew neither moved nor spoke for the moment. He had scarcely mastered himself, when a sound as of something falling on the floor in the next room was heard.

Pattie disappeared by the door opening into the corridor, and Matthew, starting to the other, which was open, saw Mr. Stopp bending to pick up a gold pencil-case, which it was that gentleman's habit to twirl in his fingers.

How long had he been there? How much had he heard? His face revealed nothing.

He advanced to the table where Matthew had been sitting, and, craning over the sketch, inquired whether it was ready to be sent off.

Matthew answered that it was, and then continued,—

'There was something I was going to mention to Mr. Chamfer before he went out, if I had had the opportunity.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Stopp, turning his regard on Matthew's hands.

'The relative of mine you referred to died last night. It will be convenient to me to be absent this afternoon.'

For one instant Mr. Stopp lifted his eyes to Matthew's, letting them fall again immediately to the contemplation of his own shoes. Without waiting for any expression of sympathy, Matthew continued,—

'You will perhaps mention to Mr. Chamfer the cause of my absence?'

'Yes; but you will make a note of the time you leave, as I am going to advise Mr. Chamfer that, in the payment of salaries, a deduction for all hours of absence be made.'

In this remark Mr. Stopp modulated his voice to the precise tone of severity which he thought the occasion called for. He always did what, according to his standard of propriety, was proper; and he had the less difficulty in conforming to this standard, because it was erected on that first of all proprieties—what is proper, that is, due as belonging to one's self. He would have thought it proper in this case to make a few frigid inquiries as to the circumstances of the death which had been mentioned, not as showing any heartfelt sympathy with a subordinate: for it was proper in a rising man to cut himself clear of all ties between him and those he was desirous of leaving behind; but as showing his own punctilious observance of what custom had established as proper; and to manifest contemptuous indifference to a flattering observance of such a custom by him he could not but regard as extremely insolent on the part of Matthew.

The latter retired to the back office, oppressed only with one thought: how much of the scene between himself and Pattie was known to Stopp?—apprehensive, not for himself, but for Pattie.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE two stools he had left vacant were now, on his return, occupied. On one of these Mr. Skimflight, indifferent to the tracings to which Mr. Chamfer had enjoined his attention, was balancing himself with his back to the wall and his feet on the top of the stove. Motioning Matthew to him with a movement of his head, he whispered, while indicating with a wink and with another movement of his head the occupier of a stool at the further end of the room,—

‘Old Chippy is asking very pressingly after you.’

The old man who was sitting there had the air of one who was afraid of getting into somebody’s way. He seemed as he sat to be shrinking as much as possible into his clothes, which, old in fashion and in wear, appeared to be worn not so much to cover him as to hide him from sight; for which purpose, perhaps, they were very closely buttoned up. When, with trembling hands, he took a pinch of snuff his blue eye glanced furtively round, and he hastily returned the box to his coat tails, as if apprehensive lest the sight or the smell of it might offend somebody. Nevertheless, the atmosphere about him was strongly infused with the odour of this habit, as also with another which was readily associated with the high tone of his complexion.

He received Matthew with a low inclination of the head, and as the latter approached him, laid on an adjacent drawing-board a small paper superscribed *M. B., Esquire*.

Unfolding it, Matthew read as follows:

‘DEAR SIR,—I have learned from our esteemed friend, Mr. G., of the irreparable loss you have sustained in the night. Permit me to express the profound sympathy I feel for you on so melancholy an occasion. Sir, temporary embarrassment compels me once again to make trial of your kindness. The immediate advance of ten shillings would be of the greatest service to me. May I hope you will favour me with the loan of such an amount?—Yours respectfully,  
J. C.

‘P.S.—I will repay this sum with the numerous others for which I am indebted to you.’

Slipping the money under the old man’s drawing-board, Matthew gave a message to Mr. Skimflight for his friend, Jack Gurgyle, and hurriedly left the house.

He wanted to think by himself. Pattie’s discovery to him of a secret he had so little suspected, filled him with self-reproach. He had admired her for her beauty, he had been drawn to her by the sweetness of her disposition, and it had filled him with pity to see a heart so warm and affectionate shrinking in the chill solitude of her present home. He had listened to her innocent murmurings with



patient sympathy, and had sought, in a thousand little acts of kindness, to break the monotony of her life.

It was true, too, that the thought had more than once occurred to him, that she regarded his attentions in the light of a flirtation. It was quite compatible with his view of her character, to believe that she would consider it as natural for every man to desire to flirt with her, if not to win her as a wife; and to believe also that she was the last person in the world to resent the flattery of such a desire, so long as it was unattended by the inconvenience of a protestation of anything serious. If it pleased her to think that such a desire was at work in him, he would have regarded it as showing too great a tenderness for his own vanity to wound hers by making her aware that she was mistaken. Let her assume such flattery if she pleased: as to the assumption of anything more serious, he felt that she was in no danger of it.

In this he was deceived by his own feeling of security, and it was here that he had erred.

How could he undo the wrong he had done her? As for Stopp, it was not certain that he had seen or heard anything; and it might be possible to conceal from Pattie the origin of the noise that had startled her. But how to lessen the humiliation which she was sure to feel on discovering her mistake? This was the thought that troubled him.

To say that he was insensible to the flattery of such a woman's love, would be to describe him as something very different from what he was. But, whatever might be his sense of such a tribute to his self-esteem, it was as nothing compared with the overwhelming self-reproach that attended it. This feeling, acting on a mind still suffering from the relapse of the previous night's excess, was not slow to induce the despondent mood. Everything presented itself in its blackest hue. His whole life rose up against him in accusation. Divided energies, repeated failures, severe application robbed of its fullest fruit by intervals of dissipation, high designs rendered ridiculous by suspension at the culminating hour, advantage let slip through irresolution at one moment and passed by in blindness at another, asceticism conjoined with high aspirations and conviviality ending in the lowest debauchery—such were the phantoms of his past. He seemed to have lived to no other end than to find out that he had utterly mistaken himself; and it seemed to him that he had made the discovery too late.

Dreading the familiar despondency which he felt was creeping upon him, he turned aside to have recourse once again to the chiefest cause of it. Whatever self-restraint he might still be able to exercise in the future, a stimulant for the present moment seemed an imperative necessity.

The house which he had entered, and to reach which he had gone slightly out of his way, was a secluded one, situated in the rear of Mr. Chamfer's premises. He had hastily swallowed the

excoriating mixture which had been served to him as brandy, and was on the point of leaving this dingy retreat when he suddenly made out in the gloom of a retired corner, shrinking as far away from the light as possible, while resting timidly on the edge of a small upturned barrel, the trembling form of Mr. Chipples.

Seeing himself observed, Mr. Chipples rose from his seat and bowed. Coming near, he said,—

‘Mr. Matthew, sir, will you permit me to take advantage of this unexpected opportunity to thank you for your kind response to my appeal? I assure you I feel very deeply indebted to you. May I venture to ask if you will take anything, sir?’

‘Thank you, Mr. Chipples, not now. Another time it would be a great pleasure.’

‘At least, sir,’ resumed Mr. Chipples, drawing his hands still further within his cuffs, ‘allow me to express to you by word of mouth, the profound sorrow with which I have heard of the death of your esteemed relative. He was an old and respected friend of mine, if I may take the liberty of referring to him in such terms.’

‘Mr. Chipples,’ said Matthew, suddenly turning round upon him, ‘who *was* my uncle?’

Mr. Chipples answered with greater promptitude than was his habit.

‘Upon my honour, Mr. Matthew, I don’t know, sir.’

‘But, at all events, you have known him a long time—longer than I have—tell me all you knew of him before my time.’

Mr. Chipples shrank perceptibly within his clothes, and looked furtively behind him; putting his glass to his lips, he seemed in his trepidity to choke himself; recovered from this, he took out his snuff-box, and then, without opening it, returned it to his pocket, with an air of apology; but he did not speak.

‘What you can recollect of him before my time,’ resumed Matthew.

‘Not now, Mr. Matthew, not now, sir, if you please. They are waiting for me at the office. I told them I should be back in a few minutes. I only just slipped out to get a little relief for that old pain of mine in the chest. Do you know, sir, I think it must come from sitting.’

‘Very probably, Mr. Chipples, very probably. But I should take it as a favour if you would tell me what I ask. The briefest epitome is all I desire at the present moment.’

‘Pray, excuse me, Mr. Matthew; pray do not press me, sir,’ murmured Mr. Chipples. ‘Oh, my dear young sir,’ he resumed, in shrinking beneath the other’s hand, which was laid upon his shoulder, ‘why talk of a painful subject?—why seek to revive a shame that will be buried with your uncle?’

A shame that would be buried with his uncle? His uncle’s own words of the night before seemed repeated: ‘*When I am dead and gone, and all my shame is buried with me.*’

'There was some great trouble in my uncle's past, then, Mr. Chipples?'

'Don't talk of it, my dear young sir; let it die out of memory;—if it may.'

'What was this *shame*, Mr. Chipples?'

'I thought you knew of it, Mr. Matthew—at least in so far as it concerned your uncle—in so far as it concerned your uncle,' repeated Mr. Chipples, with emphasis. 'I thought your remark as to your uncle's past referred to that part of it, otherwise I should not myself have referred to it.'

'You do not tell me what it was, Mr. Chipples?'

'My dear sir, why should I put you to needless shame?'

'This shame, then, cannot be remedied—cannot be wiped out?'

Flinching before the other's determined gaze, Mr. Chipples edged away towards the friendly gloom which he seemed to need to protect him.

'Yes or no to my last question,' said Matthew, 'and then I have done.'

Mr. Chipples faintly whispered,—

'No, Mr. Matthew; no, sir,' and then hastily swallowed what was left in his glass.

Matthew hurried out into the air to resume the path which he had turned from to an end so different from what he had found. Memory was now charged with a burden more intolerable than before. Under the ugly shadow of this new discovery, his own past grew darker still. His squandered energies, his growing need of the bottle, the hundred other self-reproaches that would not be stilled, not least among them now, the cruel blindness of his intercourse with the innocent Pattie,—all rose up with a strength which, in his present mood, was not to be resisted.

---

### CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER maintaining for generations a fame which had made its sign a household phrase in those parts of the country whence most of its visitors travelled up to town, the 'Golden Sheaf' was come to be regarded by the residents in its own neighbourhood as an establishment which had outlived its purpose.

By those who pretended to know most about it, its end was said to be imminent; even those who pretended only to know least about it, talked of it vaguely as 'coming down.' Those who really did know something of the matter knew that its existence was intended to terminate, as nearly as possible, with that of the only remaining 'life' upon which the lease of the premises was now held; and that this 'life,' in the common course of nature, and in

conformity with the best known 'annuity tables,' could hardly be expected to endure much longer. In the projective fancy of an energetic estate architect, the site of the old house had already been appropriated. Its protruding stories and its stooping gables, in a locality which everywhere else was keeping up smartly with the times, had long been regarded as indefensible incongruities. Some expressed doubts of the safety of the structure; others ridiculed the style of the management. Meanwhile, the 'life' went on living, and, in disregard of anything in the 'annuity tables' to the contrary, seemed bent on continuing to live, and the 'Golden Sheaf,' in consequence, went on standing. It still continued to invite the well-endowed rector and the prosperous grazier under its sanded archway, still continued to look with all the chill reserve of its doorless front on the every-day public of the pavement.

For these latter a side bar was provided; and it was this side bar, opening on to a narrow passage leading from the main thoroughfare to the network of streets behind, which Matthew, coming by the nearest way to keep the appointment mentioned in his conversation with Pattie, had stopped to observe. Curious to know the whole character of a house which might still be regarded as the home of one he was so intimately acquainted with, he pushed open the door to enter.

The appearance of the persons standing inside caused him to hesitate. He began to doubt whether his presence might be welcome there.

The whole company was intent on observing the progress of a quarrel going on between an elderly man behind the bar, and a tall one in front, neither of whom seemed to be able easily to dispense with the support of the counter between them.

'And what,' cried the tall man, pushing back his brown paper cap with one hand, and throwing open his white flannel jacket and striking a broad, deep chest with the other, 'what happened to the cove as jumped over the counter and turned me out? Why, when his mates went, a few days afterwards, to see how he was a-mendin', they only know'd him by the tone of his voice. *That's* what happened to *him*. Now, is there anybody here as would like to turn me out o' this house?'

Looking round to receive the approval of the company, the tall man in the brown paper cap and white flannel jacket was the first to notice Matthew standing in hesitation at the door.

'Come in, sir; come in, sir,' he said, in tones of reassurance. 'Don't be afraid, sir; we're all chained down.'

A familiar voice suddenly exclaimed,—

'Here, mind who you're talkin' to!'

And Matthew was a little surprised to see Richard step forward to hold open the door for him.

'Oh, so it's a friend o' yours, is it, Richard?' said the tall man. 'Always introduce your friends to your father, Richard, and then

he'll know as you don't keep bad comp'ny. Very proud to make his acquaintance, Richard; and, if the gen'l'm'n's that way disposed, I shall be proud to drink his 'ealth.'

'Don't mind him,' observed Richard to Matthew; 'it's only My Bloke.'

The elderly gentleman behind the bar, who, having lost the thread of the argument he was engaged in when Matthew entered, had been mentally pursuing it with a frowning brow, while with difficulty preserving the upright position which he had incautiously assumed, now exclaimed,—

'No mistake about me! I am John Bull! Plain John! Plain John Harkles! Look a man straight in the face and tell him what I think of him! Strong as a lion, and as hard as old nails! I always appreciate kindness, but if any one pricks me, I bleed. Kindness is one thing, and insult is another.'

With which remark he recollected the presence of the man in the brown paper cap and flannel jacket. Drawing himself up to a height which made him totter on his heels, he called out,—

'Now then, Spike, you take yourself off!'

'Look here, guv'nor,' returned Spike, 'don't you try to stand too upright, or you'll fall back'ards.'

'Never you mind what I shall *do*. You mind what I *say*.'

'What for?' reasoned Spike, in the brown paper cap and white flannel jacket.

'Because I'm master here,' thundered plain John Harkles. 'Because everybody in this house shall obey me—everybody!'

At this moment a glass-door at the top of some steps opened, and a girl of twenty years or so peeped down upon him.

From an air of fellest rage, the elderly man changed instantly to one of immovable tranquillity; and with the exception of Spike, in the brown paper cap and white flannel jacket, every one changed his posture, and appeared to be reflecting whether he had done anything wrong or not.

'All right,' said the elderly man, 'we are all quiet here.'

'Quiet indeed,' she whispered, and having induced him to go up, with much tottering, to where she was standing, she then, with a little snatch intended to mark her severity, readjusted his cravat, with another pulled down his wristbands, and with another pushed back the hair from his forehead. 'Quiet indeed! and you came down here to keep order!'

'Well,' replied the elderly man, with submission, 'I do try to keep them quiet, but it's no use. It's that Spike. He comes here and upsets me every day. Every time he's turned out, he swears he'll never enter the house again, and then the next day he comes and behaves as bad as ever.'

'There's an ungrateful old man for you!' exclaimed Spike, appealing to the company. 'And if it wasn't for me he wouldn't have no society at all!'

'Now, grandpa,' whispered the girl, 'you come and sit down quietly in here.'

'Yes, gran'pa,' interposed Mr. Spike, 'you go and sit down and be quiet direckly, you naughty, bad boy, and behave yourself, do ! I won't keep your comp'ny no more, that I won't.'

Plain John Harkles looked round, as if to retort on his enemy, but in submission to a warning look from the girl, remained silent, and reluctantly retired.

'And now, Spike,' cried a barman, in obedience to a whispered direction from the girl, who was still looking down from the shelter of the curtained glass-door, 'you are to go home this instant !'

'What for?' inquired Spike sulkily.

'Go home, Spike,' repeated the barman, 'or I call in the police.'

'Well,' exclaimed Mr. Spike, with an injured air, 'after that insult, I'll go ! And mind this,' he continued with ominous distinctness, again turning to the company, 'I never set foot in this house again !—mind that !—understand me, all !—I never set foot in this house again !'

And with that Mr. Spike flung himself out of doors.

'Richard,' said the girl, again in a whisper from the top of the steps, and from behind the curtained glass-door, after beckoning to the boy, 'go and see your father safe home, and then come back for your message—if you have time.'

'He don't want no seein' home, miss : he ain't got no money.'

Here Mr. Spike himself re-entered ; with the air of one revisiting the scenes of earlier days.

'Pint o' beer,' he said with dignity, glancing round as if, perchance, he might recognise, here or there, a face known long, long ago ; but at this instant, seeing a policeman appear at the other door, he took one stride and disappeared again ; only to reappear, however, at the door behind the constable, and imitate the shrill cry of a cock ; after which intimation that the present cheerfulness of his mind remained unaffected by anything the 'Sheaf' could do, he withdrew, and did not come back.

All this time Matthew had been regarding the young lady. Her air was such, that in such a place she took him by surprise.

For the sake of furnishing a reason for being there, he said to a waiter,—

'Will you tell me, if you please, if Mr. Maybright is in the house ?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the man ; 'but you have come in by the wrong door ; round to the front, sir, if you please, and under the archway.'

'Ah, yes, thank you,' said Matthew, and he went out.

In obedience to a sign from the girl, Richard also went out and made his way in by the front of the house, and then received from her a message to Pattie.

## CHAPTER XIV.

As he crossed the thoroughfare on his way back to Mr. Chamfer's, the boy observed Matthew perusing the picturesque exterior of the old house by the light of the moon. This perusal being continued for some minutes longer, Matthew turned under the archway, and mounting some steps of spotless whiteness, inquired for Mr Maybright.

'Reverend Maybright, sir?' asked the attendant. 'Yes, sir. Mr. Bernock, sir?'

'Yes.'

'This way, sir; the gentleman gave orders for you to be shown up at once, sir.'

Conducted upstairs, he saw, coming out of a room at the end of a long corridor, the girl whom he had seen below, and by her side a gentleman, with whom she was talking in French.

Then, said she, he was not going to leave for the country that evening after all. He changed his idea very quickly.

It was because he found London too charming when she was there.

But, as he ought to know, she detested flattery.

Well, then, it was because he resembled a woman, and never knew what he wished.

So he used nothing but flatteries or insults.

As they passed him to go downstairs, while trifling in this strain, Matthew found himself listening to the voice of the gentleman. It struck his ear as something familiar, but he could not call to mind where he had heard it. It had an English turn like the face. Certain as he was that he had heard the soft, drawing voice, he was equally certain that he had never seen the pallid face. But the smile, varying between deference and derision, emphasised in its workings rather than concealed by the luxuriant beard, was now a thing stamped on his memory with distinctness.

Of the lady, he was thinking that in passing she had looked at him as if in recognition.

The attendant showed him in by the same door which the lady and gentleman came out by.

'Ha, ha !' laughed some one, and a short stout gentleman with full blue eyes, and long curling grey hair; bearded as to cheek and throat but shaved about his fine mouth and chin; and dressed in a clerical suit which had something of a naval uniform about it, ran forward with both hands outstretched.

'Ha, ha !' laughed the short stout gentleman again, shaking hands with Matthew, until the bronzed hue of his own countenance became submerged under a purple flush of exertion. 'How are you? Come and sit down !'

And so saying, the short stout gentleman hurried Matthew towards the fire, pressed him into an easy-chair, and then, with a

vehement invitation to 'draw nearer,' thrust him forward almost to touching the bars.

'Ha, ha!' he laughed again. 'I was thinking of you yesterday; trying to get an observation;—a glass of wine—ha, ha!—your good health!—the sun kept himself very close all the morning—thought it would be one of the blank days you and I used to have—towards meridian, however, he showed signs of wanting to see what we were up to down here; and I got a shot at him just as he was crossing—a beautiful observation! Well, and how are you getting on?'

'At Chamfer's, pretty much as usual,' replied Matthew; 'but at home things have taken a melancholy turn.'

'I am very sorry to hear you talk so. This must be something sudden?'

'Very sudden. My uncle—you know that for some three years past I have been living with the gentleman who turned up so unexpectedly, and made himself known to me as my uncle?'

'Yes; I hope to have the pleasure of seeing him before I leave town this time.'

'You will never see him alive. Last night he was not in worse health than usual; this morning I found him dead.'

'Good heavens! you horrify me! Fill your glass. Dear me, dear me!'

'Having made you acquainted with that fact, the next thing is to hand you this letter,' said Matthew, and he handed his friend a letter which he had found on the mantelpiece in the morning.

The stout gentleman, glancing inquiringly at the address, started and looked at it with sudden intentness through his glasses.

'Then you have seen your father!' he exclaimed.

'My father!' repeated Matthew. He regarded the other with astonishment. 'Never, to my knowledge, since I was a child.'

'But this is your father's handwriting.'

He opened and read the letter, Matthew all the while continuing to regard him still with astonishment.

'This letter is from your father. It refers to a subject upon which I was to have met him this morning at the place where, according to the envelope, it was to have been left for me.'

'If the handwriting you have before you is my father's,' said Matthew, 'it follows that I have been living under the same roof with my father, believing him to be my uncle.'

---

## CHAPTER XV.

'A MOST singular man!' exclaimed the stout gentleman. 'Dear me! dear me! I am quite prostrated. Fill your glass. Dear me! dear me! I came up with the full intention of begging him



to make himself known to you. It struck me, the last time I saw him, that he was beginning to look very much worn ; and I thought it would be a mutual comfort to you both to know each other, little thinking that you were already, as you say, living under the same roof together.'

'Sir,' said Matthew, 'when, this morning, believing him to be my uncle, I asked a friend of his to tell me what he knew of him, I met with evasion. Now, knowing him to be my father, I ask you to tell me what you know of him.'

The stout gentleman for some moments regarded the fire in silence.

'It is only right,' he said at length, 'that you should know all I can tell you. The first knowledge I had of your father was aboard ship. There was something about him that struck me from the first as out of place with the rest of the crew. Amongst the middies was a young whippersnapper with a handle to his name. By some untoward chance or other your poor father managed to get on the wrong side of this youngster, by whom he was goaded to such a point, that things came at length to a very terrible pass indeed. The youngster being to some extent under me as a naval instructor, and my influence here and there having its effect, I had the very great good fortune to stand your father in good stead at this extremity. It is something pleasant to look back on now he is gone. Fill your glass. Here's to his memory.'

'Poor fellow ! poor fellow !' continued the stout gentleman. 'How can I ever forget him ? and to think that I shall never see him again. Well, from that moment there seemed to be an understanding between us. Soon after, when we were off the coast of Florida, he fell ill of the yellow fever. The doctor gave him up, but he weathered the storm. During his illness, in my other capacity as chaplain, I made occasion to be a good deal with him. It was then that I first learned that his mind was not at ease—that there was something in his past which troubled him.'

Matthew, recalling what Mr. Chipples had let fall, began to flinch.

'I don't know what it was,' the stout gentleman went on, 'but from what I do know, I judge it to have been something very sad. The first period of our acquaintance lasted only that voyage. From the time when the admiral struck his flag, I lost sight of him for years. One day, quite unexpectedly, just as I was come off a long voyage, he made himself known to me at an hotel I was stopping at in Bond Street. He was in totally different circumstances, and I could now plainly see what I had always suspected, that he had been bred a gentleman. From what he told me, I gathered that he had the management of some large estates in the west, belonging to a Mr. Hunston. Our acquaintance now went on unbroken for years. He seemed to have taken a wonderful liking to me ; and when at length I left the sea, with the intention of taking possession of a living in the gift of a member

of my family, he surprised me by telling me that the living of Thatchley, which was just fallen vacant, went with an outlying portion of the property he was managing; and to my great astonishment, proposed, as it was much more valuable than the other, that I should accept it. He said it was only for him to name me as his friend. I hesitated at first, but he put it so strongly as a personal favour to himself that I should accept his offer; and, to speak the truth, the offer itself was so tempting, both by reason of its worth and its locality in the very county where my nearest relatives were living, that I ended by finally casting anchor at Thatchley. You and your mother I found were living there constantly; but your father came only occasionally, just to stay with you a day or so, and then off again. I had hardly been there a year when your dear mother—for whom I had in that short time conceived the highest respect—was, as you know, taken with that terrible illness which snatched her from you. That must be eighteen years ago, I think.'

'More than nineteen,' said Matthew; 'I was then nearly eleven years old.'

'Dear, dear, twenty years since I first knew you! Our acquaintance has been long enough to make an old man of me. Well, well, fill your glass, and we will drink to its long continuance.'

'Within a few months of your sad bereavement, just at the time when Thatchley came to the late Mr. Vasper, the present owner's father, and when the present Mr. Vasper was still abroad—his mother was French, you know—a charming woman; but the son, though he is fond of talking her language, isn't like her—a sudden change seemed to occur again in your father's position, and this time, for the worse.'

'He ceased to manage the property at Thatchley, and in fact, as you know, he ceased to come there altogether. From that time I have never seen him except in London, and that in the strictest secrecy. The same old dread of the past seemed to be haunting him. He seemed afraid of being seen by any one who knew him except myself. He wished you to be left to suppose that you would never see him again—to believe that he left England, or that he was dead, or anything else that might present itself to you as accounting for his being lost to you for ever. I little thought during the last three years that he was living with you! I am glad to know it—very glad indeed. He was enjoying that comfort from your presence with him which I felt would be as a balm to his secret pains.'

'Do you know, sir,' inquired Matthew, 'if my father had any permanent income to rely on?'

'At first he had, and indeed for many years, but from what I gathered he forestalled it in some way for speculations, which were all unsuccessful.'

'What do you suppose was the nature of this income?'

'An allowance from some one, I fancy; and of this some one he often complained bitterly, but his allusions were all of the vaguest sort.'

'From what source, sir, do you suppose he derived his income in recent years?'

The stout gentleman flushed purple again at this, but stammered after a pause,—

'Oh, he had still one friend left him to depend on.'

Matthew had little difficulty in surmising the name of this friend; and he was glad now to see in the ransacked premises at home proof that the dead man had set some limit to his trial of the generosity of such a friend.

'You knew him probably under the same surname as you have known me under?'

'No, Burgon—Richard Burgon!'

'As my uncle, he called himself Richard Bagnell. I wonder which name is the right one.'

'Neither,' said the stout gentleman. 'Before your dear mother died, the very day indeed on which she died, she told me as a secret that though her husband had married her under one name they had lived under another. She had no knowledge of why your father found this necessary, but she had reason to believe that the necessity for it was a terrible one; and therefore in placing in my hands certificates of her marriage and of your birth, which the strange circumstance of her husband's living under an assumed name had induced her always to have ready to place in your hands if anything should happen to her, and you were old enough to be entrusted with such a secret, she enjoined me never to make her trust known to you during your father's life except with his consent. Under the hope that the moment might come when he might with safety reveal the mystery of his life—and I have always somehow fancied, considering the evidently influential position of his connections, that this would be of advantage to you—I have, on every occasion of coming up to meet him in London, brought these certificates with me. After waiting for nearly twenty years, at length I am free to place them in your hands.'

Matthew perused them with natural interest.

'Well, then, it appears,' said he at length, putting them away in a pocket-book, 'that I am Matthew Bernock, as I am now known, and for my part I never knew that I was ever known by any other name.'

'There is not much to be gleaned from those documents, I fear,' observed his friend.

'No,' replied Matthew. 'The addresses of my father and mother and of their parents are all given as in London. That is too wide a field to commence inquiries in. It might be worth while, however, to go to Somerset House, and see if the birthplace of any one of them is to be found, as in case of my ever feeling disposed to pursue

the matter further, and a village or some small place in the country being given, I should at least have something more likely as a starting-place.'

'To be sure, to be sure,' said the stout gentleman.

'I don't know, sir,' continued Matthew, 'whether you would care to call and personally assure yourself of my father's identity.'

'By all means; I should certainly not like to omit taking a last look at my poor friend.'

'The question of his identity is probably of little consequence,' pursued Matthew, somewhat musingly; 'but it may perhaps be as well to have your evidence at command.'

Here a tap at the door was heard, and the young lady whom Matthew had last seen in the corridor entered, and, walking up to the stout gentleman, with a smile, said,—

'A letter for you.'

'Which our little housekeeper has graciously brought up with her own white hands,' rejoined the stout gentleman, taking the letter with a bow. 'Ah, I see! just as I expected,' he continued, after a hasty perusal. 'My dear boy, I must leave you now. I am sent for where I must go immediately; but you knew my time would be short with you to-night; yes, yes. My dear young lady, will you do me the great favour of letting it be known that I shall not be in to-morrow between nine and six? Thank you.'

All this time, the stout gentleman was moving about in nervous haste, taking up a great many things in different parts of the room only to immediately lay them down, while now and then stopping to look at his watch, and, having put it back in his pocket, straightway to take it out and look at it again; these exertions bringing back to his face a more strangulated purple than ever.

'I learnt this habit of acting with promptitude at sea,' he said.

In further illustration of which habit, he caught them by the arm, and hurried them away with himself in such breathless haste, that he was only saved by the adroitness of Matthew from tumbling all three in a heap downstairs. Having tried to put the wrong arm into each sleeve of the overcoat which was held out to him, done his best to get one of his gloves on with the thumb on the wrong side, and twice run upstairs for something he had forgotten, he looked at his watch for the last time, and immediately asked what time it was.

Meanwhile all present were crowding about him, as though he was somebody that must constantly have something done for him. Even the sombre-visaged coachman took his eye for a moment off his horses to look round with a smile; and the footman shut the door and put up the steps with the air of one panting for a service more adequate to the expression of his feelings. The stout gentleman himself let down the sash, and waved his hand in adieu with all the fervour of a man setting out for China at the least.

## CHAPTER XVI.

TURNING round, after following the carriage with his eyes into the street, Matthew found all gone but the young lady.

'He seems as great a favourite here as at his own rectory,' he said.

'Is he a great favourite there?' she asked.

'Yes, indeed,' he replied; and he was just going to make her a bow in parting, when a door opened, and Mr. Gurgoyne lounged out.

'Oh, so you two know each other, then?' he remarked in his rapid manner; and then, without introducing them, he continued, 'Where is the governor, Kate?'

'In the parlour with Aunt Parlbly; and aunt wants to see you about Lenny; and you will please to remember, Mr. Jack—and if you don't remember I shall be very angry, mind—that grandpa is not to take any more to-night.'

And she led the way into a snug room, where a lady with a gentle face was listening to the elderly gentleman whom Matthew had last heard denouncing the man in the flannel jacket.

More in soliloquy than in address to the lady, the elderly gentleman was recapitulating several points of excellency which he had from time to time observed in himself; notably those of great hardness of constitution, depth of chest, soundness of teeth, extreme reach and accuracy of memory, and above all, marvellous promptitude in saying something put to the purpose.

'Here is Mr. Jack come to see you, grandpa,' said the young lady.

'Jack! what, Jack the Giant-killer?' At which unexpected scintillation the elderly gentleman burst into a loud fit of laughter. 'There,' he continued, 'who would have thought I should say that? I don't know what makes me say these things. A friend of mine said to me the other day, "Mr. Harkles," says he, "how do you think of these things? You always seem to have a Roland for an Oliver." "I don't know," I said; "I suppose it's a gift." And,' added Mr. Harkles, 'I suppose it *is* a gift.'

Matthew's name being made known, Mr. Harkles observed,—

'I am proud to welcome any friend of Mr. Gurgoyne's. But I hope he will excuse this habit of mine of saying things. The fact is, I am always thinking; I think too much. Jack, you rascal,' he continued in a lower tone, 'ask me if I don't want something to drink.'

'You wicked grandpa!' exclaimed the young lady, 'I heard you. Now, Mr. Jack, you are not to ask for anything. You and Mr. Bernock must help yourselves from the sideboard. Grandpa has got his glass here.'

'I won't drink it,' said Mr. Harkles, resolutely. 'It's nothing but water. Sister,' he continued, in pathetic appeal to the lady with the gentle face, 'you see how I am treated.'

'My dear brother,' said that lady; and Matthew thought that her voice was as gentle as her face; 'you know it is all for your own good.'

'Ah, you are all against me, I see!' sighed Mr. Harkles. 'You are all against the poor old man. No wonder I am so unhappy. I always have been unhappy.'

'Grandpa!' exclaimed the young lady, in reproach.

'Thrown on the world young,' continued Mr. Harkles, in a voice of deep grief, 'and left to fight my own way upwards. Kicked about from place to place, until I had made a home for myself. And then nothing but trouble; trouble in my business, trouble with my wife—though she is dead and gone, God bless her!—trouble with Pattie's mother, though I forgive her, poor girl!'

'My dear brother,' remonstrated Mrs. Parlbly.

'Trouble in everything,' pursued Mr. Harkles, almost tearfully now; 'and therefore I do think, after a life of such unhappiness, after all I have gone through, after all I have suffered, and with that Spike always coming here to upset me, a little more whisky in all that water is not a great thing to ask for!'

'Give it him,' said the young lady to Mr. Gurgoyne, in a low voice; 'I can't; for I am sure it is killing him.'

'There, old man!' exclaimed Mr. Gurgoyne, acting on this permission to the utmost extent of the vacancy in Mr. Harkles' glass, 'you must make that last you all night, mind.'

'Aha!' suddenly shouted Mr. Harkles, in a voice that made the chandelier glasses ring. 'Aha! some day I'll do as much for you.' Astonished at the aptness of this remark, Mr. Harkles once more fell into an exhausting fit of laughter.

'I don't know how it is I think of these things,' he said; 'I always seem to have something ready. It's a gift, I suppose.'

'Pattie!' exclaimed Kate, on a sudden.

And some one, muffled up in furs, had burst into the room and flung herself into Kate's arms. The latter, kissing over and over again the laughing face, all aglow with exercise, that was pressed against her own, continued scoldingly, 'You naughty, daring girl, to venture out without permission.'

'Uncle is gone out, and won't be back till bedtime, and I was so lonely, dear, and I pictured you all so happy here.'

As she went to kiss her aunt and grandfather, she shot a glance at Matthew, which somehow reminded him that he told her in the morning of his intention of coming there that night.

'What! are you come back to see the old grandfather?' said Mr. Harkles. 'You wouldn't keep him on short allowance, would you, Pattie? My dear, you should come back altogether, only Kate says it wouldn't do; and, my dear, I don't want to have any more trouble. Your poor mother—'

'I hope, darling,' quickly interrupted Kate, 'you didn't come alone?'

'No; Richard is come to take care of me.'

And Kate and her aunt had scarcely attended Pattie out of the room to assist in taking off her things, when the majestic Pattie's boy-protector himself looked in at the door, and began nodding in the direction of the elderly gentleman, who was now seen to have sunk in a heap between the arms of his chair, into a sudden and heavy slumber.

'He's off,' said Richard, at the same instant vanishing, as if on an emergency.

He returned immediately, in company with a powerful ostler, who, spitting on his hands and rubbing them, as if he wanted to fight the elderly gentleman, seemed suddenly to change his mind, and catching him up by the waist, carried him out of the room, Richard walking in advance, with a bedroom candlestick in his hand.

In answer to Matthew's look of inquiry as to the meaning of this summary proceeding, Mr. Gurgyle said,—

'If he had his sleep out in the chair, they wouldn't get him upstairs all night when he woke up; so the rule is to get him to bed directly he drops off.'

'Why did you give him all that whisky, Jack?'

Mr. Gurgyle waited until Matthew had drunk off, at one draught, the glass which he had just refilled for him, and then said,—

'Why did you drain off your grog in that way, Mat?'

'Because I wasn't thinking.'

'Because you like it; because you want it,' said Mr. Gurgyle.

'If I liked it so well or wanted it so much that I thought the day would ever come when I could not leave it off for ever on the instant resolution, I would never touch another drop from this hour forth.'

'Oh, if that's your mood, you had better have some more.'

And as Kate, with Pattie and her aunt, returned, Mr. Gurgyle filled his friend's glass again.

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

'THANK you, Mr. Jack,' said Kate, 'for taking grandpa in time.'

Her mind seemed to be relieved of a heavy burden; and hardly hearing Mr. Jack's disavowal in favour of Richard, she sat down to the piano and played a merry air, to which Pattie sang a pretty song.

Suddenly, towards the finish of the song, Kate broke off, and turning round, exclaimed, in a voice of strong self-reproach,—

'Oh, my darling auntie, how very, very cruel of me!'

Aunt Parby sat knitting, without any expression of weariness on her face; but the amiable smile which was habitual there, had a something in it of gentle grief. She looked up, as if in grateful acknowledgment of being taken any notice of at all amidst so much hilarity.

'How do you mean, dear?'

'Mr. Jack,' said Kate, 'do you know where Lenny is?'

'No,' replied Jack. 'He was gone, for the day when I returned to the office this afternoon at four.'

'I left him there at three,' observed Matthew.

'Poor, poor boy!' sighed Mrs. Parlbly. 'I hope he is in no trouble.'

'Don't be disturbed, auntie dear,' said Pattie. 'Lenny will have your letter when he goes to his lodgings to-night, and then in the morning you will see him.'

'Yes; I suppose he will come—I hope so. But tell me, darling,' continued Mrs. Parlbly, turning to Pattie, 'how do you get on at your Uncle Chamfer's now?'

'Much more pleasantly now, dear,' replied Pattie; and as she put her arms round Aunt Parlbly's neck and kissed her, Matthew again met the gentle play of the young lady's eyes.

'Is this true?' asked Kate, with surprise.

'Yes, dear.'

As they settled down towards the fire, Jack, with the dexterity which was always his, contrived to seat himself next to Pattie; and she, seeing that Matthew made no attempt to oppose this adjustment, concluded that he wished what was between them to be kept secret for the present; and so, with a mind quite at ease, surrendered her ear to Jack, who, in the pleasant habit of chatting, was no undesirable partner.

Matthew, on his part, observing so complete a success in this direction, applied himself to the task, not of chatting with Kate, but of inducing her to chat with him.

Thus disposed, with an occasional interchange all round, and a frequent reference to the lady with the gentle face, they talked and laughed and listened until the clock struck nine.

'Oh, that dreadful clock!' exclaimed Pattie, with a sigh.

Mr. Gurgoyle, considering that he was entitled in some measure to take this as a tribute to his own powers of conversation, volunteered an opinion, without authority, that the clock was fast, ten minutes at the least.

'No, Pattie darling,' said Kate; 'it is unfortunately not a minute fast; and so I am afraid I must send you packing.'

'Well, then, you must walk home with me, dear,' said Pattie; 'do—there's a darling. The moon is lovely.'

'I wish I might, for I have not been out all day,' replied Kate; 'but what would auntie say?'

'What does Kate say?' inquired Aunt Parlbly.

'That she would go if auntie did not think it very wrong.'

'Well, my darling,' said Aunt Parlbly, 'I think the fresh air would do you good if you have been shut in all day; so if you really wish to go, I must go with you, I suppose.'

Upon which Mr. Gurgoyle instantly begged that he and his friend Matthew might be permitted to be of the party.

'You can wait here and see us off, if you like,' Kate conceded.



When she, with Mrs. Parlby and Pattie, had gone upstairs to put on their things, and to give a last look to the elderly gentleman, Jack cried out,—

‘What a splendid woman!’

‘Which one?’

‘Why, Pattie, of course.’

‘Pattie is the girl you saw this morning, I suppose?’

‘Yes.’

‘You will soon begin to wish, Jack, that you had made greater way in your profession, and saved up your money.’

‘Time enough to begin that yet,’ said Jack. As he spoke he was filling the glasses again.

‘Not that way,’ observed Matthew.

Nevertheless, while pondering the thoughts following on his own remark, he swallowed what his friend pushed across to him.

When all presently found themselves on the pavement outside, Mr. Gurgyle’s dexterity was equal to pairing him off again with Pattie. Matthew offered his arm to Aunt Parlby, who left him, however, free to follow the other pair with Kate, saying, as Richard came up,—

‘Here is my attendant.’

Richard settled his chin in his comforter, and, as they moved on, hummed a few bars of a favourite air, to assure himself that he was quite at his ease.

By way of opening a conversation with him, Aunt Parlby inquired how old he was.

Richard, looking at her for an instant, as if thinking she had made a mistake and addressed the wrong person, critically observed the moon, and remarked that he thought it would be a fine day to-morrow.

Meanwhile Mr. Gurgyle, commencing with the promise of taking the party the best road, ended by asserting that he had in truth done so, because he had brought them, as far as he could judge, the longest road.

Matthew and his friend were permitted to see Aunt Parlby and Kate back as far as the door of the ‘Golden Sheaf’; but were then, with a strong recommendation from that young lady, to go home instantly to bed, forthwith sent about their business. Having lit their cigars, they walked on for some time in silence.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

‘JACK,’ said Matthew at length, ‘hadn’t you better mend your ways, and think of marriage?’

‘I am beginning to lose the taste for this Bohemian life, Mat.’

‘*This Bohemian life*,’ repeated Matthew, with contempt. ‘What

is it, Jack? Alcohol and tobacco; a hand-to-mouth mode of living; good-fellowship. All goes gaily; you drink and smoke and brag; you think you are advancing in everything, and you over-estimate your abilities; you are always going to make a grand effort, and meanwhile you do nothing. At length comes the moment when your happiness seems to depend on what you have done; on your having money; on your having a position to offer. Then suddenly the veil is rent asunder; you see that all the time you have been standing still, or, even worse, going backwards; you think a desperate effort may yet be in time; you try to bring the vague dreams of years to realities, and you find them all baseless. What is the result of your Bohemian life? Of the alcohol and tobacco—energies which have lost their freshness; of the hand-to-mouth mode of living—an empty pocket; of the good-fellowship—excellent good wishes, but not a hand stronger or fuller than your own. You have delayed so long that you dare not hope for time; and if you dare, you are in too great a hurry to do anything. That is a first result of the 'Bohemian' life. It is a life which lads like to read about, and think about, but which men should be ashamed of.

'Never say die, Mat. We have both of us got plenty of time before us; and *your* time has not all been wasted. You have only to manage to set up in independent practice, and you will begin to make a fortune at once; and then you will have the money and the position, and all the rest of the things upon which you appear to say happiness depends.'

'I haven't done much towards such a consummation yet; have I, Jack?'

'Well, you have nearly given me a fit of the blues with your talk, and it's too soon to turn in yet, so we had better drop in here.'

When they came out into the moonlight again, they heard the distant boom of the clock at Westminster sounding twelve. Walking on for a few paces in the shade, they were passed by three tall lads, arm-in-arm, singing some such morsel as might have been just picked up at a music hall. As they rolled by, and burst into a peal of silly sounds like a distortion of laughter, Mr. Gurgoyne exclaimed,—

'Why, that's that young rascal Lenny in the middle; and they all seem under the influence of drink.'

'And we are their teachers,' interposed Matthew. 'Jack,' he continued, after a pause, 'if we can't teach them, don't you think we might ourselves be taught by those we know?'

'We know a precious odd lot, true enough,' said Mr. Gurgoyne.

'Drunkness reeks in the air about us!' resumed Matthew.

'Look at my poor, dead relative—drinking to escape from the past, and to give him hope in the future. Chipples, again, for the same reason perhaps; or, perhaps, the past and the future being now forgotten, there is only a present for him, and in that present only one burning solace. The landlord of the "Golden Sheaf," from pure monotony, apparently, sheer want of something to do. Your

own case, from a mere yielding to the pleasurable excitement of the moment, made to look harmless by a glozing devil, which whispers that you are so young you can always leave off the moment you think it is becoming dangerous, none the worse for it, but, on the contrary, all the better for a little additional experience.'

'And your own case?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Over self-confidence; too much easy security; unwarranted disdain for that of which I may presently find myself the slave.'

'And to tell the truth, Mat, you have got a strong head of your own. I have never seen you drunk, or anything like it yet. But come, if I stop listening to your preaching any longer, I shall become somnambulant. Good night.'

A strong head of his own, thought Matthew as he went on by himself; strong enough to keep the secret from others, but not with immunity from its irresistible effects; strong enough, with that keen consciousness of the observation of others which was also his, to keep him tranquil when the rest were unloosed. But he was as amenable to the stimulant as the rest; under its influence there was the same outpouring of brain power with him as with them; only, while they were its playthings, he was its master, using its own strength against itself to control it. And though, when the morning came, his was the calmest front, the want of the energy so prodigally spent was not unfelt even by him. The vague multitudinous fear, the black despondency, the numbed brain had already warned him. Meanwhile, confident in the sense of mental strength which his not inconsiderable acquirements gave him, he disdained to think himself beginning to be what it horrified him to see others in their old age were become. But was not the beginning already made? Was he not in danger of presently finding himself so far steeped in the degradation as to be overpowered by it?

He looked up to the broad moon, and the sudden sight of its purity moved his heart. He thought how softly its light had fallen on the pale gentle face he had seen for the first time that night—a face lit with a finer spirit than poor Pattie's.

If this face were sent to interpose itself between him and the degradation he saw about him!

Not usually swayed by sentiment which he had not sifted to the bottom, he could yet thus fondly beguile himself! As though the man lived who would not take the side of virtue, if virtue always came in the shape of his greatest present happiness. Acting always, like the rest of the world, on the strongest motive, he here found the strongest motive in the greatest good. Between Kate and sobriety on the one hand, and drunkenness and something worse on the other, discrimination was not difficult.

As though men were always to be saved from the allurements of evil by the immediate stepping in of something still more alluring on the side of virtue! As though the narrow way not only ended in Paradise, but lay through it!

CHAPTER XIX.

'YES, it is your father,' said Mr. Maybright; 'but, in six weeks, how terribly changed!'

He and Matthew were walking away from the dead man's house, both just let out by Mrs. Spike; who, having reascended by way of the area steps, was now looking after them with her apron to her eyes.

Standing thus, she was suddenly approached by a short, well-fed man, with starting eyes and a red face.

'Who's that?' he inquired.

'Why, that's his nevvie—him you were talking about, Mr. Filps.'

'Yes, yes, but I mean the other one. What's he been here for?—to view the house?'

'No, to view the body; at least he only went into the room where it's lying, poor thing.'

'What's his name?'

'I don't know, Mr. Filps.'

'Is it a relative?—what did the young 'un call him?'

'He didn't call him anything before me, Mr. Filps.'

'You're a pretty sort to pick up anything, you are!'

'Look here, Mr. Filps, there's Mr. Matthy himself; go and ask him.'

'Next Monday, Mrs. Spike,' said the well-fed man, with his eyes protruding a little further, 'I'll ask you for the whole of that three weeks' back rent.'

With which keen rejoinder, Mr. Filps hurried to the corner of the street just as Matthew had bidden his friend good-bye.

'Oh, Mr.—Mr.—' began the well-fed man, touching Matthew on the arm; 'Mr.—Bagnall—'

'Bernock,' said Matthew.

'Oh, Bernock, is it? I thought it was the same as the old man's,' resumed the well-fed man. 'I'm in a desperate hurry—'

'Perhaps, another time, then,' suggested Matthew.

'No, no,' panted the other. 'No time like the present; and I've got something very particular to say. Just come across into my office, will you?'

And without waiting for Matthew's acquiescence, the well-fed man led the way across the street, and into a house which bore inscribed under its balcony, and on each of its two ground-floor windows, and on a large brass-plate attached to its area railings, and on a still larger brass-plate attached to its open front door, and on the frosted glass panel of the swing-door in its entrance passage, the advertisement,—*Mr. G. Raymond Filps, Auctioneer, House Agent, and Collector.*

Entered here, Mr. Filps bawled up some stairs, 'Missis, I'm off in five minutes; down some stairs, 'Ann, be ready, in case I want

a cab; 'into a back room, 'John, get on with them catalogues; 'and then himself hustled into another room, leaving Matthew to follow. Going up to a desk, wanting neither in French polish nor in brass rails, he turned over, without looking at them, some score or so of letters which had been already opened; ran his finger and thumb over half-a-dozen sheaves of old inventories; read out the dates of two or three catalogues of past sales; hummed over the date of one that was forthcoming; glanced round reflectively at the numerous posters hanging on the walls, and bearing his own name in very large characters; pondered over an illuminated calendar, with his finger running up and down the summer months, the present season of the year being winter; and then looked despairingly at the date-box, all the while dabbing his brow and the back of his neck with a pocket-handkerchief. At length, throwing himself into a chair with the air of one who would say,—'The pressure is too much, but I will do my best—more than that I cannot promise,' he clapped his hands to his forehead, and seemed suddenly to recollect that a stranger was present.

'Let's see,' he began; 'what was that you wanted to speak to me about, Mr.—Mr.—let's see; what did you say your name was?'

Matthew gave the over-burdened mind time to recover itself.

'Oh, to be sure—stop a minute!' exclaimed Mr. Filps. 'Really, I quite lose myself sometimes. I've too much put on me, you know. It's too much for one pair of shoulders, upon my word.'

Though Mr. Filps found it very hard to bear up against this constant pressure, and often said so, yet he confessed that business was the pleasure of his life. 'There is such enjoyment in making money,' he said, and no one ever disputed the proposition with him. 'Not,' he would continue, 'that I care for the money—not I: it's the excitement of getting it that I care for. What's life,' he would ask, 'without excitement? and what excitement is there like the excitement of business? It's life itself!—and yet—' he would add—and this was his favourite paradox—'and yet it's death, for it very soon kills you. If I had been brought up to city business, to the Stock Exchange, for instance, I should have been dead afore now—I should have gone at it so!' Mr. Filps went at it under present circumstances in taking cabs somewhere on every occasion when he saw a certain prospect of charging them to somebody; when no such occasion offered, he occupied himself in making notes in his pocket-book, in shouting to his wife that he was 'off in five minutes;' and in urging his clerk to get on—not in life, but with his work.

'Well, now,' continued Mr. Filps, 'about this house.'

'Which house?' inquired Matthew.

'The house you're living in, of course. You are aware, I suppose, that I am the lessee; at least, that I hold an assignment of the lease, and that the old man held a sub-lease under me.'

'For a term of ten years, three of which are unexpired,' added Matthew.

'Oh! you know that much, do you? Well, then, perhaps you know also that the sub-lease provided that the sub-lessee was not to assign or underlet without my consent in writing?'

'I will take your word for it, for the moment,' said Matthew.

'Oh! you will, will you? Well, you may also take my word for it that I sha'n't give that consent.'

'That is to say,' observed Matthew, 'that I, who am possessed of no furniture, as you are aware, may continue to hold the house until the end of the term of the sub-lease, on condition of the rent being punctually paid; but that I am not to make what I can of my interest by assigning it to another person.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Raymond Filps; 'I suppose you'll give up possession at once, and get rid of all further responsibility?'

'That depends,' replied Matthew. 'I could make a shift to remain in occupation until another year's rent is due, and then I could leave you to distrain on an empty house. You would thus have gained possession at the cost of a year's rent. You can't get possession within a year, because, under the lease, the rent is payable yearly.'

'No gentleman would act like that!' exclaimed Mr. Filps in a passion. 'I don't know whether you call yourself one?'

'Not in the sense you attach to the term,' replied Matthew. 'In your vocabulary, the word means a man who, having money enough to tempt extortion, is too easy or too proud to resist it.'

Mr. Raymond Filps seemed astonished.

'If,' continued Matthew, 'you ask me whether it would be honest to do the thing I propose, I reply at once, yes; because it is the only pressure that can be brought to bear upon you to make you do what is right. And, in return, I ask you, would an honest man do the thing you propose? The clause you refer to was simply intended to give you a voice in the selection of a new tenant, not to enable you to force a loss upon your sub-lessee. The difference between the fifty-pound annual rent payable under the sub-lease held by my late relative, and the annual value of the house if let at its full worth, is twenty-five pounds at least. The value of this difference was purchased by a payment in the nature of a fine, on the grant of the sub-lease to my relative; and this you are proposing to deprive me of by taking an unjust advantage of my position. I don't ask you whether what you call a gentleman would do that; I ask you, would an honest man do it?'

'It seems to me,' said Mr. Filps, shifting uneasily in his chair, 'that this is a case for compromise. Now, come, my time is too valuable for me to stop haggling over a paltry affair of this sort; I offer you five pounds to give up possession—there!'

Matthew, without replying, went up to the desk and made a few figures on a scrap of paper.

'The present value of an annuity of twenty-five pounds, payable for three years certain,' he then observed, 'calculated at five per cent. compound interest, which is giving you the full benefit of present payment, is a trifle under seventy pounds. If, therefore, your object is immediate possession, you must increase your offer.'

'I shall do no such thing,' exclaimed Mr. Filps, white with the excitement of getting money. 'I shall let another year's rent accrue, and then, if you don't pay up like a man, I shall bundle you out—bundle you out, sir, clean out into the street!'

'In that case,' said Matthew, with the air of a disinterested adviser, 'you would purchase, at the price of a year's rent of fifty pounds lost, a two years' annuity of twenty-five pounds, the value of which, at the beginning of the two years, would be some few pounds less than fifty pounds. You would thus be a loser in the affair.'

Mr. Raymond Filps, unchecked in the exciting pursuit of his own interests, was a loud-tongued animal given to the display of a superfluity of high spirits. Thwarted in his career by the interposition of another person's interests, he was a vicious cur which, pulled back by the tail at the very moment when it is about to seize upon its prey, turns to snap at anybody within its reach. He would now have snapped at Matthew but that he was afraid of him.

'As I said before,' he at length remarked, as though he would now deliver himself once for all, 'this is a case for compromise. Come, now, just to settle it without any further waste of valuable time, I double my offer—ten pounds—there!'

Matthew only smiled.

'Why, bless the man!' exclaimed the prodigal Filps, 'what does he expect?—Fifteen pounds—there!'

'To save you the trouble of going up steps in that fashion,' said Matthew, 'I will state at once that I shall not take less than fifty pounds.'

'Fifty devils!' cried Mr. Filps.

'The reason why I offer you a bonus of twenty pounds in so small a matter,' continued Matthew, 'is, that I wish to avoid the trouble of putting myself in a legal position to make a formal surrender.'

'And twenty pounds is all you mean to bate for that, is it?' asked the other, sneeringly. 'You won't catch me waiving the regular form for such a consideration as that. Is there a will?'

'No; and I am not disposed to take out letters of administration to administer to next to nothing. Give me a cheque for fifty pounds, and I will hand you over the sub-lease and the key. You will clear about twenty pounds by that course, because the house can be let instantly, as you know; take your own course, and you will lose a few pounds.'

It was in vain that Mr. Filps urged reasons for not giving

more than he had offered; he was so driven into a corner by the other's unmistakable determination, that he was compelled in the end to agree to take possession at the price of fifty pounds.

'Very well,' said Matthew, putting on his hat, 'we will carry out our bargain—say, this day week.'

Mr. Raymond Filps, being left alone, scratched his head and rubbed his ears.

'Bargain!' he muttered. 'Confound the fellow! Where did he learn to make a bargain? I thought he did nothing but draw in a harcheyteck's office in the day, and take his pleasure of a night. And, hang me, if he didn't seem ready just now to go into the present value of a pepper-corn rent running on to doomsday! D—the fellow! I shall only clear a twenty-pun' note by the affair after all; and if I had closed with the old man's offer before he died, I might have cleared a fifty. And this chap is barely thirty yet! D—it! I hate avarice in a young man.'

## CHAPTER XX.

MATTHEW, having obtained this day for his own, walked straight for Somerset House. He had learnt that the dead man was his father, and that his name was Bernock. The next thing to learn was where the Bernocks came from. Was there anything in what his father had so vaguely hinted at after all? If his father had been the means of getting Mr. Maybright presented to such a living as Thatchley, this was not altogether improbable. And the vision of Kate somehow made him try to think it less so.

'Strange,' he thought, 'that until last night I should have postponed the question of money with such indifference! For years I have been studying as leisurely as though I had only to begin the serious work of my life to achieve it at a stroke. And now, close on thirty, I am asking myself what I have done, or what I have got, to put myself forward as a man. All in an instant I want to leap to a fortune. Jack little thought last night, that in warning him I was only shaping out my own position as I now see it.'

His searches proved of no avail. Counterparts of the certificates which he already possessed of his own birth and of the marriage of his father and mother he found; but an entry of the birth of either of the latter he could not find.

'Thus,' he thought, in leaving the building, 'my only starting-place at present is the place of their marriage in London, and that is too wide a starting-place. Who was that *Francis* my father mentioned with such threatening, I wonder?'

Passing out under one side entrance flanking the gateway, he saw, passing in under the other, the man he had met talking in French with Kate the previous night in the corridor of the 'Golden



Sheaf.' He was walking with his eyes on the ground, smiling at his own thoughts.

'Who is he?' said Matthew to himself; 'and what has he got to do with Kate? Good heavens! I think of her as if I had known her for years. That man's smile is abominable.'

For some time he continued to wander listlessly through the fog and the mud of a cheerless afternoon, seeing in the straying of his own footsteps the incertitude which in indolence had too often marked his past, and in the long blue distances of the streets, where he presently found himself, the material resemblances of what he saw in his future as it then appeared to him. Turning, at length, when it had grown quite dark, in the direction of the temporary lodgings he had engaged the day before, he suddenly remembered that he had left the house without giving directions as to his dinner. So once again he turned, this time to seek a house well known to him as a retired corner much frequented by his friend Mr. Gurgoyle.

At this place, in a long low room, with a hissing grill at one end, the first person he saw was Mr. Gurgoyle himself, tossing up a piece of money, under the sympathising gaze of two cooks and an attendant waiter, to decide some point in a proposed programme for dinner.

'Let me join you, Jack,' said Matthew.

'I am deuced glad you have turned up, Mat. And, you see,' continued Mr. Gurgoyle, on sitting down, in allusion to what the toss-up had decided, 'chance was for once in favour of economy.'

'I wish, Jack, expenditure wasn't a matter of chance with you altogether. You really seem sometimes quite unfitted to manage your own affairs.'

'I am called to sit in solemn council to-night on another man's, for all that,' said Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Where?' asked Matthew, listlessly scanning a newspaper.

'At the "Golden Sheaf." You had better come with me.'

Matthew showed sudden interest, and lowered his paper.

'I could hardly intrude into the affairs of a stranger, Jack.'

'It's no stranger; it's that young rascal, Lenny. You know quite as much of him as I do, and are infinitely more competent to advise. There, now, it is all settled; you will come.'

So when dinner downstairs had been followed by a bowl of punch, and a pipe upstairs, the two companions found themselves, towards eight o'clock, once again welcomed in the private parlour of the 'Golden Sheaf.'

## CHAPTER XXI.

'TALK of the devil,' cried Mr. Harkles, as if by sudden inspiration, on seeing Jack, 'and he is sure to appear!'

Recovered from the shock of astonishment which this unexpected play of wit had caused him, he whispered Jack to ask him what he would take to drink, on the ground that 'the Young Un' had been keeping him very strict all day. He did not, however, appear to have exercised the same vigilance over himself, for, rising to welcome Matthew, he disappointed expectation by suddenly dropping back into his seat, where, assuming a posture of extreme rigidity, he fixed his gaze sternly on a waiter who had just entered the room, as if to dispel from the latter's mind any suspicion that his master was drunk.

'Now, I hope, grandpa,' said Kate, when the waiter was gone, 'that you will not take any more to-night.'

'There you go!' exclaimed Mr. Harkles, in a voice in which remonstrance was lost in despair. 'You see how I am treated,' he continued, in appeal to Matthew and his friend. 'If I go into the bar, there's that Spike comes and upsets me, and if I come in here, I am told I am taking *too much*. I know I take more than I ought, but I can't eat, and if I can't eat I must drink. I know it's wicked, but I have lost all interest in myself. Lenny, my boy, never lose interest in yourself.'

Young Mr. Skimflight, who was leaning against the chimney-piece, sullenly listening to his mother's tearful entreaties to do better in the future, kicked a protruding ember between the bars, and without turning to Mr. Harkles, replied that 'it was too late to tell him that now; he had lost all interest in himself, and didn't care what became of him.'

Mrs. Parlbly only put her handkerchief to her eyes.

'There isn't money enough to start me like a gentleman,' continued Mr. Skimflight.

'Don't talk like that, Lenny,' said Kate, 'or I shall lose patience with you. If auntie hasn't money enough for the present to start you better, you know that is because you have spent so much and got into debt so much. You know poor auntie is obliged by your extravagance to give up her nice house at Northampton, and go and live in one of her own that won't let, in an obscure, out-of-the-way, dull village.'

'That's right,' observed the injured Mr. Skimflight. 'That's right, throw it all in my face. That's how I'm encouraged.'

'Lenny, my darling!' sighed his mother. 'I wish to encourage you, I wish to smoothe your path for you; but you *must* try to encourage yourself, my darling. Now, do promise that in future you *will* try in everything to act for your own good.'

At length, after being over and over again voluntarily assured

that all his debts should be paid, that there should be no reproaches for the past, and that, as to the future, the utmost should be done to meet his own wishes, young Mr. Skimflight graciously promised that in future he would in everything try and act for his own good : a promise that Mrs. Parlbv took so much as a personal favour to herself, that she put her arms round his neck and gratefully kissed him.

‘And now, dear,’ she said, ‘what do you propose?’

‘Well, look here,’ said Lenny with cheerfulness ; for, having by an adroit fit of sulkiness induced his mother thus to clear the ground for him, he thought he might now break out into a little sunshine for a moment or two ; ‘I can’t stand any more of this architecturing.’

‘But with your talent for drawing, Lenny,’ objected Kate.

‘Oh, drawing, yes, drawing is all very well,’ replied Lenny. ‘I don’t mind sketching the front of a house or something of that sort ; but when you have to calculate all your measurements first, and draw every line according to your measurements, and when you have to scheme where to get all your rooms, and to consider where your doors and windows and chimneys will come, and then to make your front agree with all that ; who would ever care to try and design any front at all ? And then, look at the miserable details of the construction—the sizes of the joists and rafters and purlins and studs, the thickness of the walls, the intersection of the roofs, the contriving of the staircases where there isn’t room for them—oh, the very sight of a sectional drawing makes me wish I had never heard the name of architecture !’

‘What is your opinion, Mr. Gurgoyle?’ asked Mrs. Parlbv in a voice full of sad anxiety. ‘Is the profession suited to Lenny, do you think?’

‘Now, Jack, no humbug,’ said Lenny ; ‘let’s have the truth.’

‘Well, to tell you the truth, Lenny,’ responded Mr. Gurgoyle, ‘I don’t think you’ll ever do much in our line, because you have set your heart against it too much. But, I should like to hear what Mat has got to say. Now, Mat, clear your throat and begin.’

Mrs. Parlbv looked at Matthew imploringly.

‘Don’t go talking a lot of stuff to mother, Mat, just to please her and Kate,’ again interposed Lenny ; ‘give us your own opinion, old man.’

‘My own opinion, Lenny,’ replied Matthew, ‘is this : that architecture is the best profession that could have been chosen for you. You have unusual talent as a draughtsman, and you are not at all wanting in powers of design. As for the rest, there is nothing in it that your head is not equal to.’

‘But the details, Mat, the miserable details—I could never master them.’

‘The details are the hard part of every art, Lenny. The art of the musician once achieved is almost a synonym for ease ; and yet what tedious details he has to go through before it is achieved.’

‘But he likes the details of his art, Mat.’

'I doubt it. What he likes is the sense of power which the facility he has acquired gives him ; the satisfaction of his love of approbation which he finds in public applause ; the money he earns.'

'But I get no encouragement from Chamfer.'

'I don't think you do : but the pupil who means to learn his art, does not wait for his master's encouragement. What you want, to excel in your business, Lenny, is application.'

'What is wanted to excel in anything, Mat, is, I think, genius ; and I have no genius for architecture.'

'And what is genius ? At least, what do *you* mean by it ? Many persons mean by it an uncommon facility for a certain thing. That is only one part of it. Another part of it is, some believe, uncommon energy ; not the explosive energy which shows itself in a burst, or in many bursts, but the quiet energy which never rests till it has gained its object, the energy which is always lifting the worker to another effort ; which often wearies, but never despairs ; which often faints, but never gives in. What people have in their minds when they talk of genius, is not at all the flighty harum-scarum thing many of them think it is. There is a great deal of this steady force about it. This steady force is often obscured by habits and manners ; by dandyism, profligacy, misanthropy, scepticism, and all manner of affectations ; but depend upon it, they are right who believe that, however obscured, it always forms an element in true genius.'

'And what does this quiet energy, this steady force, or whatever you call it, Mat, depend on, what is it sustained by ?' asked Lenny, with the eagerness of one who had another question behind that.

'A fixed idea, it is said,' replied Mat.

'A fixed idea of what ?'

'Of doing something for which you feel a consciousness of power.'

'But I don't feel a consciousness of power for anything in architecture,' cut in Lenny, with rapidity. 'How, then, can you expect me to show energy in it ?'

'He has got you there, Mat,' whispered Mr. Gurgyle. 'Drink, old man, and give him his answer.'

Matthew emptied the glass which his friend had refilled and pushed across to him, and then, after a moment's reflection, said,—

'Well, Lenny, I have at least shown you the necessity of a fixed idea. What is yours ?'

'Yes, that is the question,' said Kate ; 'and remember, Lenny, you ought now to decide it once for all. What is your Fixed Idea ?—excellence in what ?'

'You and mother know well enough what it is,' replied Lenny. 'Painting, of course.'

'Painting,' repeated Matthew.

Seeming to be reflecting on this, he was in reality considering the readiness with which Kate had adopted the words he had used. He had never felt flattery of this sort so keenly before.

'Yes, Mr. Bernock, painting,' repeated Mrs. Parlby. 'What is your opinion of it as a profession for Lenny?'

She put this question with all the trustfulness of one who believed that Matthew was able to tell her for certain what were her son's chances of one day becoming President of the Academy.

'It is an uncertain thing to take to for a living,' said Matthew, as if in debate with himself.

'A living!' exclaimed Lenny impatiently. 'As though a true artist thought only about a living! I must knock along on what mother can allow me at first. Besides, I mean to get a scholarship from the Academy—perhaps a travelling studentship. Then I shall study all the great schools abroad, and see the world. It will be time enough for me to think about earning a living when I am ready to begin thinking about making a fortune. Until then, I can put up with bread and water if I only feel that I am progressing. I shall be too much absorbed in my art to feel small privations.'

His mother looked at him with admiration while he was talking; but when he finished, turned sadly to Matthew, as if inquiring whether she might indeed join in such a hopeful view of such a dubious future.

'Well, Lenny,' said Matthew, 'if you will only make painting your Fixed Idea, and follow it up through thick and thin, with no turning back or wavering, I have no doubt there is a bright future in store for you.'

'So now then, my dear,' began Mrs. Parlby, whose last doubt seemed resolved by this encouragement on the part of one whom she gratefully accepted as an authority, 'we must consider that you are to be a painter. I only hope, my darling, that you will find all the pleasure you anticipate in your new profession.'

'It will be all pleasure!' exclaimed Lenny. 'Look at the life I shall lead—sometimes in the galleries of a great capital; sometimes in the streets of a picturesque, out-of-the-way old town; sometimes in the midst of glorious landscapes. It will do me good to get out of this unnatural life in London. There will be no more of this drinking and idling then; it will be all frugality and hard work. Imagine me on a sketching tour—sleeping in a hayloft, perhaps, at night; up in the morning with the sun, and after a bath in the nearest stream, or a rinse in a bucket of water, and a hasty breakfast of a crust of brown bread and a handful of fruit, off in the fresh morning air to make sketches of wayside bits here and there, and to study landscape tints such as a man could never paint the like of unless he saw them with his own eyes.'

'You mean to make landscape your special study, then, Lenny?' said Matthew.

'That or historical painting,' replied Lenny; 'I don't know which yet. I incline to landscape though. At all events, I have taken new lodgings near one of the parks for that purpose—only one room this time, so as to begin to get used to roughing it, and

not to come too heavy on mother at first,—but a capital view of the park; you and Jack must come and see it. The park will be handy, until I get a travelling studentship, for studies of outlines of trees and foliage.'

'But I thought your strong point in drawing was the figure, Lenny?' said Matthew.

'Well, I find it does come easy. If I don't make way very fast with the others, I shall stick to that. I outlined an arm this afternoon from Bob, the model, off-hand, just as I met him at his house of call. Splendid arm he has got.'

'Arm!' cried Mr. Harkles, with sudden attention. 'If you want an arm to draw from, Lenny, here is one for you. There's not another man in England, I've been told, of my weight and size can show one like it.'

And for the exhibition of this uncommon development of muscularity, Mr. Harkles essayed the trying operation of removing his coat without leaving his chair. Finally, resting at a point where he seemed to have rendered further movement of any sort on his part impossible, he gave a deep sigh, and instantly went to sleep.

The powerful ostler being summoned, carried Mr. Harkles off to bed, as on the night before, with the air of a man who would put up with no opposition.

'And such an exhibition as that,' a harsh voice was heard to say outside, 'we are not allowed to make laws to prevent.'

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

FOLLOWING the sound of this harsh voice into the room, came a man with a harsh appearance. He had long, straight, iron-grey hair, drawn off from a narrow and retreating forehead, a prominent nose looking upwards, a wide mouth, sloping shoulders, and an overhanging waist.

When this gentleman had been introduced to Matthew by Mrs. Parly as Mr. Peevers, her co-executor, and when he had taken an easy-chair near the fire, and smoothed back the hair from his brow, he said,—

'An executor of the will of Mrs. Parly's *second* husband—not the father of that young man' (nodding towards Lenny, who scowled at him). 'A very good man, perhaps, but I had no knowledge of him myself.'

This being so, Mr. Peevers seemed to leave it to be understood that the character of the late Mr. Skimflight was a thing that had not been vouched for.

'And such an exhibition as that,' continued Mr. Peevers, returning with unction to his first remark, 'we are not allowed to make laws to prevent!'

'I am afraid, Mr. Peevers,' said Mrs. Parlby with timidity, 'that "total abstinence" would kill my brother now.'

'Kill him!' exclaimed Mr. Peevers. 'Look at me! Has it killed me?'

'But you never commenced the habit of drinking stimulants,' interposed Lenny.

'And why?' asked Mr. Peevers, by no means unwilling to be led on to pursue the theme—'and why? Because at first I had no money to spare, and then, when I began to earn enough to have a little to spare, because I was too wise. I saw all the men in the shop I worked in getting drunk every Saturday and Sunday, and then, on Monday or Tuesday, borrowing money, to carry them on through the week, from a man who was more knowing than they were, and who obliged them at sixpence interest for every half-crown. Thinks I to myself, why shouldn't I save my spare money like that man, and make something by it as well as him? So, instead of squandering my spare money in drink, young man, I saved it, and lent it out at interest.'

'To the other fellows to get drunk on,' observed Lenny.

'Not to get drunk on, young man, but to supply the place of the money they *had* got drunk on,' said Mr. Peevers, drawing a nice distinction.

'But I am afraid,' resumed Mrs. Parlby, 'that my poor brother could not live at all now without having *some* recourse at least to the stimulus of alcohol.'

'Couldn't he?' cried Mr. Peevers—'couldn't he? Give me the power and I would soon make him do it! I would have an Act of Parliament passed prohibiting not only the sale, but also the manufacture and the importation of intoxicating liquors. That would shut up all the drinking shops, and stop private drinking as well.'

'Then,' said young Lenny, beginning to look combative, 'because a certain number of people wickedly drink to excess, all the rest are to be prohibited from innocently, and, perhaps, beneficially, drinking in moderation.'

'They must be compelled to make a sacrifice for a good cause,' replied Mr. Peevers.

'And all the people engaged in an immense trade must be ruined,' continued Lenny.

'They ought not to have engaged in a wicked trade,' answered Mr. Peevers, with decision.

'A great number of persons do themselves a serious injury by excess in the use of tobacco,' pursued young Lenny. 'I have read that they not only injure their own constitutions, but their children's after them; and so their excess in the use of tobacco may be regarded as a national evil. Now, Mr. Peevers,' continued Lenny with pertness, 'is it true you have got a son-in-law who keeps a big tobacco shop, and supplies many score of smaller ones; but seeing

that smoking is so injurious to so many of our fellow-creatures, why don't you agitate for an act to suppress the tobacco trade?'

'A totally different thing!' pronounced Mr. Peevers, with the same decision as before—'a totally different thing! Anybody can see that.'

Mr. Peevers did not himself know why it was a totally different thing; but he did know that he had a daughter married to a man whose interests depended on the tobacco trade.

'There certainly seems to be this difference between excess in smoking and excess in drinking,' observed Matthew; 'excess in smoking, where it does not lead to excess in drinking, rarely leads to any other excess at all; while we know that too much drinking very often leads to many other, and, frequently, very terrible excesses.'

'Yes; and it's a very great pity people can't leave off drinking to excess,' said Mr. Gurgyle; and as he said so he pushed one of two stiff glasses of grog, which he had been mixing, across to Matthew.

'And now, Mr. Peevers,' commenced Mrs. Parlbly, 'to the subject of our meeting. We want your opinion on what we propose to do for Lenny.'

'To do for Leonard!' repeated Mr. Peevers. 'I should like to hear what Leonard proposes to do for himself! Look at me. No one ever did anything for me; I have done everything for myself; and now see what I am. All I know I have taught myself; and I am no dunce either. I suppose I have got more money than any one else in this room; and who else in this room besides me can say that he is self-taught?'

Matthew for the most part could; but, as he never felt ashamed to deny the fact, so neither did he ever feel inclined to boast of it, seeing that all the pains his education had cost him he had borne for his own benefit.

'All I have got,' continued Mr. Peevers, 'I have earned myself; and now I own all the terrace I live in, and the man who mortgaged it to me is glad to come and eat a dinner in my house whenever I ask him. Everything I own,—knowledge, property, position—all,—I owe to myself. You are always talking of what's going to be done for you, young man. Let's see what you are going to do for yourself. Look at me.'

'But, Mr. Peevers,' inquired Mrs. Parlbly meekly, 'what would you advise Lenny to do?'

Mr. Peevers, having smoothed the hair from his forehead, and wiped his mouth with the side of his hand, and palpably warming with the subject, continued,—

'Look at me! and, if you want to see a copy of me, look at my son James! His schooling never cost me more than sixpence a week, and after that, all he learnt he picked up for himself. He bought a book on Latin, and picked up a little Latin; then he



bought a book on Greek, and picked up a little Greek; then he bought a book on Hebrew, and picked up a little Hebrew, and so on; and now there's not a subject on earth you can ever bring up in his presence but what he's got something to say about it. And you know what he is, Mrs. Parlbby, in the pulpit at our chapel. I would back him against a good many of the Bishops for a good slaughtering sermon—in fact, the Bishops are a mild lot, with no talent at all for slaughtering. If you want to hear powerful preaching, you must hear my Jim.'

'Your son James is a very talented young man, Mr. Peevers,' remarked Mrs. Parlbby, with hesitation; 'but I do wish he did not take the errors of other denominations so much to heart. I am always afraid when I hear him that a stranger to our congregation might be apt to mistake your son's zeal for—for—well, for want of charity, which I should be grieved to have charged against us as Christians.'

'Never mind what the others charge against us!' cried Mr. Peevers. 'The thing is, what we charge against them. We mean to assert ourselves, and we mean to humble them. And my Jim is the man for the task. You should have heard his last series of sermons, which he very neatly called "The Props of Christianity; or, The Tenets of Our Sect." A regular series of knock-down blows for the others. Didn't he show up the Parsons! And you should have heard him at the new General Bible Meeting last week!'

'Ah,' said Mrs. Parlbby, 'I want to hear about that, Mr. Peevers. I have great hopes that this new General Bible Meeting, where all the various sects of the district can meet on common ground, will heal many of the old differences, and secure greater co-operation in the work that all have an equal interest in.'

'Well, it hasn't yet quite answered the expectations of the parish parson,' replied Mr. Peevers. 'He convened the meeting, he said, for the purpose of co-operation, as you call it, but we all knew his real object: we all knew he only wanted to involve us in matters in which he took the lead, so that we might gradually, without noticing it, come under his sway. But we were up to him. No sooner had one of his party proposed him to take the chair, than up got one of our side and disputed the parson's right to take it, and, in the name of our chapel, proposed Jim as chairman.'

'And what did the gentleman who had convened the meeting say?' inquired Matthew.

'Oh, when he saw we showed fight, he turned as meek as a lamb, and said something about his having on an occasion like that, when we were all met on common ground, no objection to sit under the presidency of any fellow Christian whatever, and so James took the chair.'

'And how did the good work for which the meeting was called go on?' inquired Mrs. Parlbby.

'Oh, as for that, it wasn't begun,' replied Mr. Peevers. 'When my James was moved into the chair, he followed up his opening victory by giving the meeting a hint of what plans our chapel intended to follow out in the matter. These, the parson tried to make out, were conceived in such a spirit that, if they were carried out, they would open up the very questions which he wanted, he said, to be kept in the background. There was a confession! As though our chapel meant those questions to be kept in the background! As though my Jim didn't mean to fight them out on every possible occasion! Well, by the time every one worth hearing, that is nearly every speaker on our side, had had his say, it was time to break up; and I don't think the others will be in a hurry to call another meeting.'

'What a sad end to such a hopeful scheme!' sighed Mrs. Parlby.

'What a glorious victory for Our Chapel!' rejoined Mr. Peevers. 'That is one of my James' triumphs over our enemies at home. And now he is going out as a missionary to preach them down amongst the heathens. Our chapel means to assert itself against the others abroad, and my James will be its mouthpiece. The poor blind niggers only want to hear him to see the light, and be on Our Side.'

'What a mournful thing it is,' said Mrs. Parlby, sorrowfully, 'that we cannot do the work of our Master without the division of these unhappy "sides"!'

'Our party means to assert itself,' cried Mr. Peevers. 'The truth must be preached, and the others must be taken down. My James has begun the good work in this great metropolis of ours,' continued the speaker, lapsing into the phraseology that was so grateful to his ears, 'and he will continue it on Afric's burning sands. Our side will make itself heard out of his mouth. We mean to show the others that we are as strong as they are; we mean to bring down their pride; we mean to make them eat humble-pie.'

'Just so,' observed Matthew; 'humility being the great lesson of Christianity, you mean to have it practised—by the others.'

Mr. Peevers, revolving a doubt as to whether there were not something satirical in this, paused, as if making ready for a rejoinder.

'But, to go back to the great question of the evening,' interposed Mrs. Parlby, in nervous haste to avert unpleasantness, 'what do you think, Mr. Peevers, would be the best thing we can do for Lenny?'

'Look at me!' resumed Mr. Peevers. 'Look at my Jim! and then, as I said before, let your young man ask, not what is to be done for him, but what he is to do for himself. You must teach your son to act for himself, Mrs. Parlby.'

'What would you say, Mr. Peevers, to painting as a profession

for Lenny?' asked Mrs. Parlbly. 'He wants to learn to paint pictures.'

'What! to be an artist!' exclaimed Mr. Peevers with disgust. 'Well, if that's the new line you've picked out for him, you know what my opinion will be. My opinion—'

'Spare yourself the trouble of giving it, Mr. Peevers,' broke in Lenny, with the petulance of a very young man. 'Spare yourself the trouble.'

'No; I never spare myself trouble in giving my opinion, young man,' replied Mr. Peevers. 'If I am asked for my opinion on any of the vexed social or religious questions of the day, I am always ready to give it. I don't ask for other people's opinion; that's their affair, not mine. I know nothing about other folk's opinion; I know my own, and that's enough; and if I am asked what ought to be done in any respect, or what can be done in any respect, I am ready again; I say, look at me, look at my James. I don't want to look at anybody else, and I don't want to hear anybody else. As long as you limit yourself to my opinions and my experience, I don't mind what trouble I take to give 'em to you. For instance, I have put myself to the trouble of coming here to-night, to this house, an hotel, a public-house, a house that I ought never to set my foot into—and for what purpose?—simply to give you my opinions and my experience. If they're any use to you, Mrs. Parlbly, you are welcome to 'em; but I am not come here to listen to this young man's experience or to his opinions.'

With which conclusion Mr. Peevers rose, buttoned up his waist-coat, hitched up his coat, and, having carefully smoothed back the hair from his brow, bade all a collective good-night, and walked out, blowing with the proud emotion of having offered in his opinions and his experience something worth having, and of having offered it for nothing.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

'WELL, then, mother,' said Lenny, 'the conference ends in this, that I am going to act on your co-executor's advice, and act for myself; that is, I am going to follow the profession of my own choice.'

And so, after much further talking, it was finally settled that Lenny was to be a painter. Then followed the arrangement of many preliminary details, amongst which it was to be gathered from Lenny's remarks, that by far the most interesting and important was the acceptance by Mr. Gurgyle and Matthew of his invitation to go the next evening and take a 'sort of tea' with him; to the end that they might view, in the disposition of things at his new lodgings, and the numerous purchases he had already made, as

absolute requisites to his new profession, the irresistible proofs, as he put it, of his being this time in real earnest.

'It is only a sort of tea to which I invite you, mind,' he said. 'While I am wrestling with poverty I must try and avoid the expense of entertaining people to dinner.'

The conference being soon after broken up, Matthew and Mr. Jack left the house together.

'A curious conference on a young man's future, Jack,' said Matthew, with his eyes on the clouds of smoke which he was blowing into the moonlight. 'The lengthiest speakers, a couple of humbugs. Mr. Peevers' text is Money-making, mine is Virtue. Mr. Peevers follows the road he points out, but desires that no one should follow it except himself and family. I desire every one to follow the road I point out, but I don't follow it myself. All his talk is self-exaltation; what else is mine?'

'What do you think of Kate?' inquired Jack, who had hardly heard a word of what his friend had been saying. 'You seem rather taken with her; but in my eyes she won't compare with Pattie. Hullo! what's the meaning of that? Now you are out of step.'

The mention of poor Pattie's name, and the thought of how he had unwittingly deceived her, and of how he might be able to undeceive her, had sent Matthew forward with a sudden stride.

'Well,' said he, taking an early opportunity to wish his friend good-night, 'to-morrow we must go together and see what arrangements Lenny has made for his projected *wrestle with poverty*.'

---

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE crowd of houses in the midst of which Lenny had taken his new lodgings consisted, in one part, of red brick buildings of the earlier half of the last century, with heavily-carved and corbelled door-shelters, and cool, steep-tiled roofs; and in the other part of timber-fronted ones of an older date.

On the stooping door of one of these latter Matthew and his friend, Mr. Gurgyle, found the number given them by Lenny the previous evening, on the occasion of his inviting them to a 'sort of tea.'

The several flights of stairs up which they were conducted were so wide and so solid that a performing elephant would have made the ascent without hesitation. Once off them, however, and everything was found to shake. The new visitor was surprised to observe the phenomenon of walls swaying before his eyes, until lurching forward over the inequalities of the flooring, he learnt by contact that what he saw swaying was only the paper-covered canvas which had been placed over the decayed panelling beneath.

Lenny was engaged in opening the door when his friends knocked. 'It is opened by a little trick,' he called out from within; 'you must put your shoulders against it and push with all your might while I pull.'

The door at length yielding to this little trick, with a burst which sent a tile clattering into the gutter overhead, Mr. Gurgyle and Matthew found themselves in a cloud of tobacco smoke.

'The fire-grate is so high up and the chimney is so wide that you scarcely feel the heat of the fire,' said Lenny, 'and so I have been trying to keep myself warm with a pipe. But now, then, sit down and fall to before everything gets cold.'

The table was already set. On a sofa, serving as sideboard, were spread over a fair, white table-napkin—one of a set provided and marked by Lenny's mother—ham and beef, and butter and cheese; while on one hob of the fireplace was a dish of hissing sausages, and on the other a dish of toasted herrings; and suspended by a string and hook before the fire, and aided by an occasional twist from the entertainer's fingers, was turning a remarkably plump pheasant.

'Don't put your coats on that box,' said Lenny; 'that's my seat. There, look, I'll put them into this cupboard. Mind where you go behind the table there, Jack, or you'll kick over the jug with the celery in it; and Jack, don't move back, or you'll put your heel into the fruit pies I have just ordered to be fetched in. I must learn to do my own housekeeping, you know, now I am going to be a struggling artist.'

'I think,' said Matthew, 'your landlady could do it more economically for you, Lenny; for,' he continued, glancing from one to another of the strange collection of viands, 'these do seem to me extraordinary preparations for the simple repast of tea.'

'Oh, I shall have to do without landladies when I take to wandering about the Continent,' said Lenny. 'And as for these preparations, it occurred to me that this was about your and Jack's usual dinner hour, and I was afraid you might not have remembered to dine in the middle of the day. But, Jack, will you cut some bread? you will find it on the chair in the corner; and Mat, there's some mustard in that glass there, just put some water to it, and stir it about. I haven't bought a mustard-pot yet: I'm practising economy.'

'So it seems,' observed Matthew; 'but three persons don't want a whole tumbler-glassful of mustard at one sitting. If you will give me a piece of paper, I will put some back before pouring in the water.'

'You will find the mustard canister behind the curtain on the window-sill,' said Lenny. 'Oh no! that's where the pepper and the salt are. The mustard is in the coal-scuttle: I put it there to be out of the way.'

'Why, Lenny!' exclaimed Matthew, 'here are the pepper and the salt all soaked with this melted snow; and, bless the boy! here's half the mustard overturned into the coal!'

'Never mind that, but let us begin,' cried Lenny. 'Here's just a chair each for you two, and I take the box. Be careful about your chair, Jack, there's a trick in sitting on it without its coming to pieces. You must sit rather on one side.'

'Why, where are the knives and forks, Lenny?' asked Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Oh, they are under the sofa,' said Lenny. 'Just hand them up. I put them there out of the way of any one's feet. Can you sit pretty easy, Jack, on that chair?'

'Capitally,' replied Jack; 'but if I come down I shall go into these pies, shan't I?'

'Ah, well thought of!' exclaimed Lenny. 'We will let them take the place of the herrings on the hob to get warm. Look out, Mat, with your side of the table; there's a trick in sitting at it on that side without its coming over into your lap. You must sit close up, and when you cut, press up against it.'

'Well!' exclaimed Jack, 'this is the queerest "tea" I was ever invited to! Why, counting the herrings, there's fish, flesh, and fowl, not to mention the pastry on the floor. But, I say, what's this against my feet, Lenny?' he asked. 'Isn't it in rather a dangerous place?'

'That's the whisky,' replied Lenny. 'Pass it up, Jack, and we'll have a drink to help to keep us warm.'

'No, no, no!' said Matthew. 'We are going to be very abstemious to-night. Just one glass to finish with, and that's all, Lenny.'

He had that very day come to a resolution, not indeed to abstain altogether from intoxicating liquors, but to be very abstemious in the use of them.

'Shall I pour out the tea?' he asked.

'Yes,' replied Lenny; 'but mind how you do it. There's a trick in using that tea-pot. If you stoop it too much, the tea comes out at the lid, and if you hold it too high, that straight spout shoots it out like a fire engine into the middle of the room. Now, steady; there you go into the sugar-basin, and now you are into Jack's plate. Try again! The saucer's nearer; now, try the cup. Well done!'

'Why, Lenny, this tea hasn't drawn yet,' said Mr. Gurgoyle, looking at the mixture of hot water and floating tea-leaves in his cup. 'You must have poured the water in before it boiled.'

'Ah, I remember!' replied Lenny. 'I let the kettle stand on the fender after it had boiled, before I filled the tea-pot.'

'Never mind, we will help it up with some whisky,' said Jack.

And in an instant he had poured some of the spirit into Matthew's cup.

'No, no! not for me,' said Matthew. 'You won't mind me emptying mine into the coal-scuttle, Lenny?'

'What nonsense!' exclaimed Lenny. 'And you were talking about economy just now.'

'And besides, Mat,' added Mr. Gurgoyle, 'you look washed out. Drink, man, it will put a little life into you.'

Truth it was that Matthew did feel low. The sudden abstinence for a whole day was, as usual—for his good resolution was no new thing with him—telling on him very severely. Nature had not yet recovered her spring. So, without offering much resistance to Lenny's injunction not to make himself disagreeable, he emptied his cup.

'Does any one know,' began Lenny—'but stop; hand up the clean plates, Mat, and you, Jack, carve that pheasant. There, now we go in for our third course. Does any one know what has put Pattie into such high spirits since the day before yesterday?'

Matthew gulped down his second cup of tea and whisky.

'I almost think that fish was a little over-salted,' observed Mr. Gurgoyle.

'No, no,' said Matthew, but without objecting to the filling up of his cup with tea-and-whisky. He was thinking of how he could spare her in her own thoughts.

'And the odd thing is,' continued Lenny, 'she is on worse terms than ever with Chamfer just now; he gave her an awful wiggling yesterday.'

'The little savage!' hissed Jack. 'I wish I'd been there! Deuce take it, Lenny! what have I put my heel into, though?'

'Is it something pulpy?' asked Lenny in alarm. 'Then it must be the lemons for the punch. I was just wondering where I had put them. I threw them down there out of the way.'

'It is the lemons,' said Jack, producing a shattered brown paper bag with something moist inside.

'And that comes of your feeling so vicious about Chamfer,' observed Lenny.

'How can one help showing anger, when he thinks of that little beast bullying such a lovely creature!' exclaimed Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Lovely creature!' repeated Lenny. 'The idea of Jack Gurgoyle talking of lovely creatures! Why, Jack, I thought all your worship was dedicated to architecture.'

'Of course,' said Mr. Gurgoyle, 'my highest thoughts are for architecture—true architecture, of course; not the pagan architecture of bald sterility and dead repose, but the architecture of Life and Growth; the architecture of religion—of true religion, of course; the religion of piety, the religion of swinging censers, of stately processions, of the pealing organ, of the cloistered walk—'

'In short, a picturesque religion,' observed Matthew.

'I knew you would sneer, Mat,' rejoined Mr. Gurgoyle. 'But if all people were like you there would very soon be no true art nor true religion at all; they would have nothing to hold on to. I belong to the same church as you do, but your views are too broad for me; broad even to looseness; so extended that they are attenuated; so attenuated, that they are, even to the mind, intangible.'

You are wanting in intensity. Perhaps I am too intense, but then I cannot help it; I am carried away by my art and my religion. Lenny, I find this whisky uncommonly good, but the tea-leaves get down one's throat. Hand over the kettle and let us try it without the tea.'

'Yes,' said Lenny, passing the kettle, 'we'll try a little whisky and water and art this time.'

'Now, that's a covert sneer at my religion,' observed Mr. Gurgoyle, mixing the grog and handing it round. 'How do you find yours, Lenny? rather weak? it's quite strong enough for you; and I'll add a little more to Mat's, and that will make the general allowance of whisky proportionate to the water. Now, don't you get into that bad habit of sneering, Lenny. What is there in art or in religion opposed to the enjoyment of the good things of this life? Do you think the chapels round the chancel of Wells Cathedral, or the West Front at Rheims, grew out of the brains of water-drinkers?'

'It would be to the greater praise of the human mind if they did,' observed Matthew.

'Certainly they did not,' continued Mr. Gurgoyle; 'they were conceived by men who, you may be sure, had no contempt either for the pantry or the wine-cellar, and who made no pretence to the contrary. I belong to the same church as you do; but say what you like about the monks of the other, some of them were jolly old bricks to live. A man intense in one of his likings is apt to be intense in another.'

'Then,' said Lenny, 'with your intensity, Jack—I am not sneering, old man—if you admire Pattie, you are apt to admire her intensely, and then you will soon be in love with her. By Jove! what a joke it would be if poor old Jack was hit at last!'

'Hold your tongue, you young rascal!' exclaimed Jack. 'A man may admire a girl without being in love with her. And there is no inconsistency in my being passionately fond of my art, and at the same time low—admiring a beautiful woman, and, confound it, she is a beautiful woman, and why shouldn't I say so?'

'Well,' returned Lenny, 'I can't understand your calling Pattie beautiful. When she and I were young 'uns, and used to play together, the chief thing I noticed about her was, that she was much given to putting her arms round the necks of persons she was fond of, even round the neck of the big dog she used to romp with. I thought her something of a duffer, but I dare say I was a horrid young brute then.'

'That you must have been,' observed Mr. Gurgoyle, with palpable feeling.

'Do you think Pattie is beautiful, Mat?' asked the youthful Lenny.

'Certainly,' replied Matthew. 'But what does it matter what she looks like? Woman is always beautiful if she is good, and



Pattie is thoroughly good; and under good influence and with a little more training in the work of this life, she would make a good wife, Jack. But what was that you were saying, Lenny, about her and Chamfer?

'Oh,' said Lenny, 'when I went upstairs yesterday to ask her something, he was giving her an awful wiggling. He said he supposed she was going to be another disgrace to the family.'

Matthew neither turned nor looked, but he held his breath and waited.

'He told her,' continued Lenny, 'that she should not stay there any longer; that she should be sent to live with my mother in the country. She said she didn't wish to stop there any longer if he didn't want her; that she should be only too glad to go and live with her grandfather at the "Sheaf," but that she should not leave London.'

'Brave girl,' exclaimed Mr. Gurgyle.

'I can't make out what it was all about,' said Lenny.

'Something that I should like her all the better for, I know,' observed Mr. Gurgyle.

'Whatever it was, it was all through that Stopp,' said Lenny.

'Why?' asked Matthew, but without turning.

'Because she said it was,' replied Lenny. 'She let out that much to me.'

Matthew drained his glass, and then turned to stare at the fire.

'I always hated that Stopp,' remarked Mr. Gurgyle, filling up Matthew's glass and lighting a fresh cigar for himself.

'Come, Mat,' said Lenny, 'what are you looking so dull about? It's not you who are in love with Pattie?—is it, Jack?'

'You hold your tongue, you young rascal,' again growled Mr. Gurgyle.

'Although,' continued Lenny, 'she thinks a lot of Mat. He's such a solemn old buffer to talk, you know. She told me to follow his advice in all things, and to practise economy. That's why I bought such a cheap tea-pot, amongst other things.'

'And those engravings that you have hung up there to get smoked,' added Mr. Gurgyle.

'Oh, but an artist must have something about him to look at,' said Lenny. 'I don't call it money thrown away on such plates as these.'

'Well, there's some very good drawing in them for you to study, if you like,' commented Mr. Gurgyle.

'But, talking of drawing,' said Lenny, suddenly opening the window and leaning out as far as he could, as if to get a view of something, 'you see I am quite close to the park here, so that I shall never want for a study of foliage when I am doing trees. You can see straight into the park from this window. I can see the twigs of one of the trees quite plain. Will you have a look?'

The other two having taken his word for it, without risking their own necks, Lenny continued, when he had closed the window,—

'But I don't think I shall go in for landscape, or for historical painting, after all,' said Lenny.

'Another change, Lenny?' asked Matthew.

'Well, I find I am rather a dodger at faces,' replied Lenny. 'I think I shall make portraits my specialty. I sketched the head of a man I saw this morning down by the docks, and I quite delighted myself with it. I think I shall do a fancy Murderer's Head out of it in oils, and I shall take to wandering about now, looking for bits of character. It's wonderful what a lot you can pick up if you keep your eyes open. By way of a contrast to my Murderer's Head, I am going to make a study of the handsomest woman's face you ever saw. I came across her all through wandering about on the look out for character bits.'

'Where is she?' asked Mr. Gurgoyne.

'Where do you think? You know the "Pilgrims' Rest"?'

'What! that sink? I know it by sight; but I was never inside.'

'Nor I,' said Matthew; 'but I know the house he means.'

'She's one of your vulgar beauties, I suppose?' observed Mr. Gurgoyne.

'You are quite mistaken,' replied Lenny. 'She talks like a lady.'

'What brings her there, then?' asked Mr. Gurgoyne. 'What does she do?'

'She seems to be a sort of housekeeper or manageress,' replied Lenny. 'The landlord has his mother living with him; but she appears to be too old to do much; and there is no wife, as far as I can make out.'

'You seem to have been making yourself acquainted with the landlord's affairs,' said Mr. Gurgoyne.

'Well, the manageress interested me so much,' rejoined Lenny; 'she's something extraordinary, I assure you.'

'The "Pilgrims' Rest" is only about ten minutes' walk from here, is it?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyne.

'That's all,' replied Lenny. 'Shall we go and see her?'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Gurgoyne, getting up; 'let us go to the "Pilgrims' Rest," and take a look at this wonderful face which is to form a contrast with the murderer's head.'

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

ACCORDINGLY, Matthew, Jack, and Lenny set out for the 'Pilgrims' Rest.'

The Pilgrims, while not more actively occupied in the course of their pilgrimage, were given, especially on a Sunday morning, to a habit of contemplation. This mood was generally induced by a gentle pulling at clay pipes, and by turning over the contents of the trouser-pockets. For a good steady observation of some fixed

object, shouldering a wall was found an easy posture; but, for a near inspection of transitory objects, varied by conversation with some one over the way, the edge of the gutter was preferred. Some, who had polished up their boots, and otherwise made variations from their general working appearance, moved about at first with an uneasy consciousness of the contrast between themselves and the others; and usually, in the end, when the first sense of embarrassment was worn off, inclined to the corner, still somewhat restless, and occasionally glancing up and down the streets, with the air of persons who were looking for some one, and were rather surprised that he didn't come. Others, without affectation of being on the spot to contemplate anything but what was then and there visible, sat themselves down on the curb, to look at everything except the younger pilgrims, whose presence in public it did not seem in conformity with usage to recognise.

These younger pilgrims, between whose nakedness and the rest of the world only a few pins intervened, appeared the only ones upon whom the habit of contemplation had not yet settled. They scurried out of their several courts and alleys into the freer space and lighter air of the streets with appreciation. A cigar-end picked from the gutter stirred up interest, and a piece of orange-peel roused envious attention. The boys gave signs of a faculty for enjoyment still comparatively fresh, in an occasional scuffle all round, or in pulling a stray dog by the tail the way he didn't want to go; and even the bigger girls, with babes in their arms, lunched about with an appearance of play; and, in thumping the back of a boy who had taken liberties with them, showed a notable lingering of vitality. By these younger ones the mud or the dust, the extreme of cold or of heat, the pains of hunger or disease were borne, not against nature without feeling, but, at least, with the indifference of hard habitude; and they no more thought of wishing for the comforts of the children they saw, groom-attended and sedulously cared for, in an occasional expedition into the parks, than they thought of wishing to have wings like the birds that flew there—for wishing is a habit sustained by frequent attainment only, and the attainment of good things was what they had little knowledge of.

No more than they expected tenderness at any other times than when they were ill from those other pilgrims who, huddled up in black shawls, stood in knots at the doorsteps, contemplating their husbands, and corroborating each other in their experiences of life; marvelling at the unfathomable depth of men, who, after denying with extreme misuse of language, the undoubted surplus of a week's wages in their pockets, and on being found, five minutes afterwards, drinking without stint, would aver with the same misuse of language, that they were being treated by a friend; holding up to execration the pawnbroker's new young man, who only last Monday had reduced the advance on the Sunday coat by no less than half-a-crown, although the previous amount had been given

without question by the other young man every Monday morning for a whole nine months, and equally so the pawnbroker himself, who had confirmed the reduction, whereby another week's rent had gone in arrear; or condoling with one or the other upon the loss of the dear child who was much better off where she was gone,—forasmuch as we must all go there, and things here were getting worse and worse, and, if it wasn't for a little drop of something now and then to hold us up, we must all faint right off on the blessed earth where we stand, so help us Christ, and never try again.

In that name were not wanting those who came there to pray, and some of the pilgrims had listened in tolerant silence, even with attention. But, generally, on the subject of what the end of their pilgrimage was to be, or when it was to be,—moody indifference was shown. As it concerned themselves, some said the sooner the better; or that it could not be worse than it was now; or that it was the grave merely, and nothing else. As it concerned others, they did not attempt to conceal their opinion of its inconvenience to those who were left, for that it was a harder cost to put relatives into the ground than to give them shelter and a crust. On the whole, notwithstanding occasional hardy talk upon the subject, the pale spectre was a bugbear to most, and conversation about it was discouraged. Pending its knocking at their several doors, they took as much relaxation at the 'Pilgrims' Rest' as possible.

The benevolent sentiment conveyed in the sign of this establishment was in the nature of that far-off philanthropy which, with tears in its voice, from the cold heights of a platform implores the world to come and be as happy as itself, declares all mankind to be its brethren, and stretches forth its arms in an ecstasy of love, as if to embrace both hemispheres at once; but which, in the ordinary concerns of private life, shrinks from the individual backslider as something quite different from the great generality it has apostrophised in public; which, in a soulless morality, made easy by circumstances, sees nothing but superiority over others; which regards the punishment of some one else as the best vindication of its own virtue; and which is continually justifying its want of charity in the name of duty.

So, in invitation to the public as a mass, the 'Pilgrims' Rest' was emblazoned with offers of the handsomest nature. It told of its noted stout, of its sparkling ales, of its celebrated old tom, of its fine wines, and of its superior brandies, as if a bountiful provision for the public was its constant and only care. It proclaimed its pool and its billiards, its pyramids and its good dry skittle-ground, as if the public must be amused at any cost. Its windows were filled with superb sheets of plate-glass; its pavement lit with massive lamps richly ornamented; its capitals and mouldings covered all over with gold; and its pillars and panels decked out in all manner of colours, as if too much could not be done in honour of the public.

Inside, every corner was illuminated with clusters of gas jets, and every square foot of plain surface was inscribed with the name of something that could be had, lest by any chance a customer might forget what it was he had come there for, as if the public had to be anticipated in its remotest needs.

And yet the public, when it presented itself in an individual form, was not overcome either by any abundant comfort in the place or by any glowing cordiality on the part of the proprietor. There were so many doors for ever on the swing, and so great a confiction of draughts, even in the least unsheltered corners, that any one coming in for refuge felt rather more out-of-doors inside than in the street he had just left; and the glare of the gas was so fierce, and reflection on all sides in the mirrors so unavoidable, that the nervous customer on entering had the sensation of having unwittingly placed himself on view in an exhibition.

When the proprietor showed himself at the bar, it was usually to lend weight to the threat of some one of his smart young men to kick one of the pilgrims into the gutter. All being quiet again, he would stand silent, in his shirt sleeves, with a cap stuck jauntily on one side of his head, and his opened waistcoat dragged down by a gold chain, garnished with a big bunch of pendants, and suck his teeth with reflection. But though he deemed it no part of his duty to wait upon his customers himself, or to hold them in frequent conversation, yet he would sometimes, by the practised way in which he would draw half a glass of ale, and eye it in the light, convey the impression to the minds of all present that, though he did not appear to do much, or to say much, nevertheless, there was some one at the head of affairs who understood what he was about, and had his eye on the condition of the article which was offered them.

Sometimes, too, he would unbend to the acceptance of something to drink at the expense of one of the better-off class of his customers, such as a neighbouring grocer, who, having a public of his own to look up to him, could approach the proprietor of the 'Pilgrims' Rest' on terms of equality. Then the rest would gather as near as the divisions of the place would admit of, and listen respectfully while the landlord calmly told of the fish he had caught that day at Shepperton, or of the races he had seen run at Hendon, or of the 'Rose and Crown' which had been knocked down at twenty thousand, being two thousand more than he had bid for it himself, or of the 'Spotted Dog,' which had been offered to him at five thousand, but which he would not have at any price; for it behoved a man who had already such an affair as the 'Pilgrims' Rest' on his hands to mind what he was up to, lest the expenses should more than run away with the profits. And then he would curtly allude to the hundred and ten gas-lights always burning of a night on these premises, of the fourteen hundred pounds just expended in decorations, of what he had been asked for two more billiard-tables

upstairs, and of the scandalous way in which they had gradually run him up in the parish rates to nearly half as much again as they used to be, and to various other instances of the burdens that fell on those who undertook to provide for the public.

But, though it would seem that the landlord of the 'Pilgrims' Rest' was wholly given over to the sacrifice of himself and his fortune in making adequate provision for the public, yet he never admitted by his deportment to those actually present that they were in any way connected with that generality, nor did they themselves ever appear to regard themselves in that high light. Nor did it ever occur to them that, in paying a profit of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty per cent. on the greater part of what they drank, they had in any way contributed to the cost of the magnificence about them, or of their landlord's diamond rings, or of his little amusements at pigeon matches and elsewhere, or of his high-stepping horse and dashing dog-cart, or of the champagne that he and the grocer, and the butcher, and the sporting barber, and the greengrocer from Belgravia, and a few other thriving spirits, were so fond of when they enjoyed a quiet game of skittles a little way out in the country of a summer's night; neither did it occur to the pilgrims that there was any sort of relation between these little pleasures enjoyed by others, and the squalor and the emptiness endured by them in their own homes.

What did occur to them, and what recurred to them, and that pretty frequently, was that for lifting the cloud of depression which was for ever settling down upon them, and for slaking the thirst that was for ever lurking in their throats, the 'Pilgrims' Rest' was as good as any other house, and rather more handy.

Mr. Juniper, the landlord, would have added—and much more respectable, for he had never had a conviction endorsed on his licence, and the police always reported his house as the most orderly and best conducted in the neighbourhood. It is true that it was no rare occurrence to see a woman round the corner screaming in the last ecstasy of defeated rage, strapped down, and carried away on a stretcher; that it was regarded as nothing surprising for a man in one of the adjacent courts to be taken in the act of jumping up and down on his wife's ribs; and that things were thought to be looking rather dull of a Saturday night if the half hour after closing time passed away without a set-to in the street, and some one being run into the lock-up, with his head crimsoned over with the staves of the policemen; it is true, also, that these occurrences were usually the direct result of a too protracted stay at the 'Pilgrims' Rest'; but, then, nothing similar took place *inside* that establishment. Mr. Juniper's young men were much too smart and active for that.

The establishment was rather noted for the smartness of its young men. Looking, in their neat black waistcoats and neckties, and their clean white aprons, and with their equally clean white

shirt sleeves, tucked up to the elbows, cool and unconcerned during their moments of repose, they were ready at the slightest nod or whistle to spring into action like fireworks. A hesitating customer had his order wrested from him before he had settled his thoughts upon the subject, his measure set before him, his money snatched up, and his change slapped down with a suddenness that made his eyes wink again. Nor was their resoluteness less than their celerity. They had the habitual air of holding the public at bay. Whomsoever the person they addressed, and whatsoever the remark—whether it was a prompt ‘Been served, sir?’ to an occupant of one of the ‘glass’ departments, or a gruff ‘Now then, guv’nor?’ to some one in the larger enclosure where full measure in pewter could be had—they always wore the same look, hinting that they would stand no nonsense. The way in which a couple of them would leap over the counter, and hustle out a noisy pilgrim, already too drunk to be quite sure of his feet, and in which one of them would then dance electrically before him on the pavement, and finish by seating him in the gutter with a butt of the head into the pit of his stomach, took the beholder’s breath away almost as much as it did the brawler’s. A not less effectual way with a pilgrim who showed any capability of resisting this method of procedure was that of one young man holding him in argument while another slipped out for assistance, returning presently to throw the door wide open, and to shout out, in a stentorian tone, ‘Police!’ into the disturber’s ear.

---

## CHAPTER XXVI.

As Lenny, accompanied by Matthew and Mr. Jack Gurgoyle, turned the corner, the last-mentioned method was being practised. Two policemen came out of the ‘Pilgrims’ Rest,’ pushing before them that culminating trial to the temper of Mr. Harkles of the distant ‘Golden Sheaf’—the big man in the flannel jacket.

‘Now then, Spike,’ said one of Mr. Juniper’s smart young men, triumphantly, ‘what have you got to say now?’

‘Oh! so you are going to crow over me now, are you!’ returned Spike. ‘And a precious lot you could have done if that mate o’ yours hadn’t sneaked off for a bobby!’

‘He’s been abusin’ Mrs. Rawlins shameful,’ remarked one of the smart young men in retort.

‘Mrs. Rawlins is the handsome manageress,’ observed Lenny to his companions.

‘And I’ve another thing or two to say to her yet,’ said Mr. Spike. ‘We’re old pals, your Mrs. Rawlins and me.’

‘He’s spent all his money,’ continued the same smart young man, ‘and now he wants Mrs. Rawlins to let him go on score.’

'And *where* have I spent it?' asked Spike. 'Yes, *where*?—answer me that. Why, here, in this very house; and now, when I haven't got a blessed copper in my pocket, I'm kicked out like this. There's treatment for you! I've often knocked down a week's ha'pence at this 'ouse.'

*Ha'pence* was Spike's modest term for his earnings.

'And now,' he continued, 'she won't score me so much as one half-pint.'

'You shouldn't have abused her, then,' observed one of the smart young men; 'and you know it's against the rules to serve on tick.'

'Oh! it wouldn't have been the first half-pint she's served me on tick,' replied Mr. Spike. 'No; nor the first, if she'd treated me to it for nothing; no, nor the last, neither. But she's goin' to turn nasty, is she? You tell her to mind I don't turn nasty. Her and me are old pals, I tell you.'

'Well, now, you move on, will you?' observed one of the policemen, with a push.

'You mind who you shove about in that way, policeman,' observed Mr. Spike.

'Well, you mustn't stop loitering here,' replied the constable.

'And you mustn't shove me if I'm willing to go quietly,' returned Mr. Spike.

'Well, then, go!' cried the policeman, with another push.

'But that ain't my road,' said Mr. Spike.

'Well, go the other,' said the second functionary, with another push.

'And that ain't my road either,' said Mr. Spike.

'Well, go somewhere,' shouted the first policeman.

'Yes, policeman, I'm going somewhere,' replied Mr. Spike, lurching back into his previous position, to the great amusement of the other pilgrims, who were now contemplating him in force; 'but I'm goin' which way I like, and I ain't goin' to be shoved.'

'Well, which way *are* you going?' bawled one of the policemen.

'This way, I think,' said Mr. Spike, after deliberation. 'But I'm not ready yet.' And he stooped to tie his shoe-string, but finding this pretence rather difficult to continue without sinking down altogether, he changed his mind and began to pay attention to the arrangement of his hair, and the set of his cap. 'Well now, I'm off—but no, I shan't go that way after all, and he came back again.'

'Here,' said one of the constables to the other, 'you catch hold of him for a minute, will you?' and he pulled out his handcuffs.

Mr. Spike instantly slid round the corner, and the pilgrims were beginning to drop back into the 'Rest,' or upon their ordinary subjects of contemplation, when he reappeared and passed like a cannon-ball between the two policemen, sending one against the smartest of Mr. Juniper's smart young men, who was shot into the



stomach of an adjacent pilgrim, and told by the latter to mind where he was coming to; and the other into the gutter, and then vanishing up the nearest court with an affectionate intimation that he would see them again to-morrow.

'Mr. Spike seems to know something of the lady who is to sit for the companion-picture of the murderer's head, then, Lenny,' said Jack Gurgoyle.

'It looks like it,' replied Lenny; 'but come in and have a look at her.'

He and Mr. Gurgoyle stepped into a kind of lobby, formed by a mahogany partition and two half-glass doors opening into the more select departments of Mr. Juniper's establishment.

'Come along, Mat,' called Mr. Gurgoyle. 'What are you stopping to look at out there?'

Leaving Matthew outside, the other two entered. Matthew continued to regard the opposite corner of the street. Standing there were two persons whom he had not expected to see in such a place.

'It is not so surprising,' murmured Matthew to himself, 'to see Peevers here; but what does that *other man* do here? He comes and goes before me like a shadow, and as silently. I can see his abominable smile from here. Just the same expression he wore when he was talking French in the corridor of the "Sheaf" with Kate, and when I saw him coming out under the archway at that register place. What does *he* do in such a locality, and at such an hour, and in such company as Peevers'? And by their side-glances over here they seem to have this house in their mind.'

Stepping quickly into the lobby to avoid a glance, which the man with the smile and the teetotaller now gave in his direction, Matthew opened one of the doors with frosted-glass panels, and joined Lenny and Mr. Gurgoyle at the bar inside. The two latter had already glasses for the three before them, and Lenny was making the best of his time in the new path of portrait-painting, which he had laid down for himself, by sketching the face of the handsome manageress. Mr. Gurgoyle, without having forgotten to empty his glass, seemed to have settled down, with his back leaning against the partition, to regard her with silent astonishment.

'You seem rather struck with her, Jack,' said Matthew.

'I am struck all of a heap,' replied Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Extraordinary woman, certainly,' remarked Matthew.

'Mat!' said Mr. Gurgoyle in a solemn voice.

'Yes,' answered Matthew, who expected to hear his friend vow that he had fallen in love with her then and there.

'Mat, am I dreaming?'

'You hav'n't fallen in love with her already, have you?'

'No, but I know some one else who did.'

'What are you talking about, Jack?'

'Twenty years ago.'

'You *are* dreaming—what about?'

'Broodley Waters, near the river Severn.'

'And you know some one who was in love with her there, twenty years ago?'

'My uncle, Walter Gurgoyle.'

'I think I have heard you speak of him as being dead.'

'Yes, twenty years ago.'

'And after all that time you are connecting him with the manageress of a London public-house, upon whom you probably never set eyes until to-night.'

'But I have seen her picture.'

'Where?'

'I have got it in my own possession—at my lodgings. I'll swear to it being the same woman.'

'You had better make a little more sure first; twenty years is a long time. But, look!—do you see whom she is talking to? Perhaps he can tell you something about her.'

## CHAPTER XXVII.

LOOKING in the direction whither Matthew had turned his eyes, Mr. Gurgoyle saw in the opposite mirror the reflection of Mr. Chipples in timid but close conversation with the manageress. Suddenly himself observing who were present, Mr. Chipples at first shrank back to avoid further observation, then reached forward slightly over the counter, and offered his hand round the partition, but quickly withdrew it as if under the fear that he was taking too great a liberty.

'I beg pardon, gentlemen; how do you do?' he diffidently inquired. 'Excuse me, gentlemen, but, Mr. Skimflight, Mr. Jack, Mr. Matthew, sir—may I beg the honour of your taking something with me?'

'All right, Mr. Chipples,' replied Jack Gurgoyle, 'we will come round to your box and drink a glass together. Come on, Mat; he will tell us, perhaps, what he knows of her.'

'Good evenin', gents,' said a voice behind them. 'And 'ow d'ye find yourselves to-night?'

Looking round they saw the countenance of Mr. Spike smiling down upon them, with the imbecility of far-advanced intoxication, from the top of the other partition.

'Ow d'ye do, gents?' he continued. 'Did I 'ear n.y respected lodger, Mr. Chipples, ask the comp'ny what they'd take? Don't disturb yourselves, gents, I won't intrude; but if Mr. Chipples *will* press anything upon me, I'll say a pint o' old six.'

The manageress looked significantly at one of the smart young men, who instantly shouted out,—

'Now then, Spike, what brings you back here again? Just you come down from that barrel, and take yourself off, will you?'

'And do you allow one of your young men to speak to your old acquaintance like that, ma'am?' inquired Mr. Spike.

The manageress turned her glance the other way with a look of contempt.

'And I ain't to be served when one of my friends is willing to stand, ain't I, ma'am?'

'Now then, Spike,' repeated the smart young man, 'are you goin' to take yourself off before I fetch the police again?'

'Don't you put yourself out, young clear-starch, else you'll wrinkle that nice white shirt-front o' yours. I ain't got no tin, but if you wants a little small change in this way,' continued Mr. Spike, putting his arms up in fighting form, and nearly falling off the barrel in the operation, 'you can have it, but not over the counter.'

The manageress opened a door behind her, and Mr. Juniper came out and frowned upon the company.

'Now then, Spike,' he said, 'you have spent all your money; go home.'

'But ain't I to be served, guv'nor, when a friend offers to stand?'

The manageress whispered something to Mr. Juniper, upon which the latter said,—

'You are drunk, Spike; go home.'

'And so my old acquaintance there tells you I'm drunk, does she?' observed Spike. 'And suppose I begins to tell tales about her?'

'James, fetch a policeman!' bawled the landlord.

The smart young man, thus addressed, lifted up a flap of the counter and slipped out of doors with alacrity.

'Yes, suppose I begins to tell tales about your *Mrs. Rawlins*?'

continued Mr. Spike in a sarcastic tone. 'You don't happen to remember anythink about Jacob's Ladder, do you?'

Whatever this shot had reference to, it seemed to Matthew to have hit its mark. The lips of the manageress lost colour; and she looked round as if, Matthew divined, to see whether it were too late to recall the messenger sent for the police. At the same moment, it occurred to him that, if the police really came again, they would most certainly, this time bearing in mind the rough treatment they had suffered from Mr. Spike on his previous disappearance, lock him up on the least provocation. Moved by sympathy with the distressed woman behind the bar, and thinking much of the interests of Richard's mother, he determined to see her husband safe home.

'Just step outside a moment, Spike,' he said in a whisper; 'I want to speak to you.'

Mr. Spike, regarding this as the certain preliminary to an invitation to drink, replied,—

'All right, sir; I'm always at the service of a gen'l'man;' and he got down from the barrel with readiness.

'Well, good-night, *Mrs. Rawlins*,' he continued, 'and try and remember your old fellow-parishioners. Say good-bye for me to young clear-starch when he comes back, and give my respects to the bobbies, and say I was sorry I couldn't wait for 'em.'

Mr. Juniper looked at the door in stern expectation of the assistance he had sent for.

'Take care of yourself, guv'nor,' said Mr. Spike to the landlord; 'and whatever you do, beware of the drink: I have to be careful about it myself.'

'Are those police coming?' shouted Mr. Juniper to one of his young men standing at the door.

'And I have noticed a very nasty look about your face of late,' continued Spike, 'which it ain't at all a good sign. Take care of yourself, guv'nor, else you'll never enjoy that little box in the country. It's nearly always the case with licensed wit'lers; when they've been poisonin' the public for twenty or thirty years, and are just thinkin' of enjoyin' themselves for the rest of their lives with a little bit o' fishin' or gardenin' in the country, then out they goes like the snuff of a candle; or else they retires with a bad leg or a troublesome in'ards, and there's no enjoyment for 'em after all. You take care of yourself, guv'nor, and be warned by that nasty look as I've noticed in your mug of late; because you don't want to lay down your knife and fork just yet, you know.'

'Go home, Spike, go home,' muttered Mr. Juniper with a heavy sigh, which he seemed unable to repress.

Mr. Spike being once outside, Matthew seized him by the arm and walked off with him.

'Now, Spike,' he said, 'what is your address? I have known your wife a long time, but I never had occasion to ask for her address.'

'Number 3 Paradise Row,' replied Mr. Spike.

'Well, come on; I am going to see you home, or you will be locked up.'

'But, I say, guv'nor,' said Spike, beginning to show signs of falling behind; 'ain't you goin' to treat us to nothing?'

'Well, we will wait until you are nearer home, at all events.'

'All right: I know a gen'l'man like you will keep his word. But that *Mrs. Rawlins* is beginning to turn nasty. Let her take care I don't turn nasty. I rather puzzled her before, but I woke her up a little to-night. I'll wake her up a little more if she don't mind.'

Naturally, Matthew felt a strong curiosity to know a little more about a woman whom his friend Jack Gurgoyle had become so interested in, but he would not encourage a drunken man to talk of another person's secret. And his curiosity was saved from all further temptation by Mr. Spike presently growing silent, and yielding to a desire to go to sleep on the pavement. Arrived at length in Paradise Row, which consisted of a narrow street of small houses, fronting with their green doors and shutters straight upon

the footway, without the intervention of areas, they were received by Mrs. Spike.

'Oh, you wretch !' she ejaculated.

Mr. Spike sufficiently shook off his desire to go to sleep to strike at his wife with his open hand ; but missing his aim, he fell on the floor and began to snore.

With Matthew's aid he was got into a back room, where, some of his clothes being removed, he was lifted on to a bed and left to himself.

Coming out to the front room, Mrs. Spike said,—

'It's very good of you, sir, to see him home ; but how did you know it was him, sir, if you'll excuse me asking ?'

'Richard told me the other night at the "Golden Sheaf" that it was his father.'

'Ah ! he would never get drunk if he only went there,' said Mrs. Spike ; 'and the wonder is to see such a man getting drunk at all. It was the last thing I ever expected to see—him a drunkard. He used to be the soberest and steadiest man any woman ever had for a husband, until we came to live in London years and years ago. And then when we lost our dear first girl, the most precious, sweet child that ever made a man fond of his home, bless her dear heart in heaven where she's gone, if ever a blessed saint on earth did go there, and work got scarce for a time, and things got rather hard at home, he took to getting out to the public of an evening, and now for years he's been growing worse and worse every day of his life ; and if it wasn't for me and poor Richard, which is a treasure of a boy to me and his poor brother and sister, poor things, what we should do for a crust of bread, God in heaven only knows.'

'He was steady in the country, then, Mrs. Spike ?'

'Yes, sir ; he had his bit o' garden there, and his flowers, and his pig and his fowls ; and of a Sunday, if he didn't care for the shady lanes and the green fields—for working folks have enough of walking and toiling about them of week days—he had the sight of them from his open door, in the cool, fresh air with his pipe. But in London there isn't much for poor folks to enjoy themselves with. If a man finds his home uncomfortable for a time he soon gets tired of the hard streets, and it's only natural he should turn to the public house.'

'Yes,' said Matthew, standing over the fire, 'and they shut up the free public exhibitions during the only hours that working people could visit them, as though the working people had no concern with such exhibitions.'

'And if they didn't shut them up,' continued Mrs. Spike, 'poor folks, after working hard all day, couldn't always be looking at pictures and glass cases, especially if they had to walk far to see them.'

'In some countries where I have lived on the Continent,' remarked Matthew musingly, 'people of all classes often sit under the

trees of an evening and listen to first-rate music ; and this pleasure, so far from estranging them from their homes, does the very reverse ; for their out-of-door music encourages the cultivation of it indoors. Their out-of-door pleasure, so far from being injurious to their indoor pleasure, is almost one and the same thing with it. It does not impoverish and degrade them, but, on the contrary, inclines them to a life of temperance and prudence, at the same time that it ennobles their understandings. In such countries music is one blessed means to the people's happiness.'

'And if,' said Mrs. Spike, 'it wasn't for an evening at the theatre now and then, what pleasure poor folks would have out-of-doors in this life, I don't know ; and never a month passes but what Richard *will* take me and his brother and sister to the play once ; for he's a treasure of a boy, and, poor things, *they* count the hours when they know he's coming, which he runs home every spare hour he gets, and no one knows his worth.'

'Of course,' continued Matthew, still musingly, and with his thoughts half on Richard and half on his subject, 'no legislation nor all the benevolent associations in the world can relieve a people from the hard task of practising prudence for itself ; but Music and the Play could make the task much easier.'

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT this moment a soft knock was heard at the door. There being no entrance passage, the person knocking, on Mrs. Spike's request to enter, came at once into the room where Matthew was. He was surprised to see that it was the manageress of the 'Pilgrim's Rest.' But his surprise was nothing to that shown by the visitor herself and Mrs. Spike.

'Sarah !' exclaimed the manageress.

'Is it you, ma'am ?'

'Am I so much changed ?'

'Yes, ma'am ; you are fuller now, as might be expected ; but the old calm look that used to make you look like an angel is grown so cold and stern.'

'Is Spike your husband ? No !'

'Yes, ma'am, he made my acquaintance when I was living with you.'

'But I have not the least recollection of his face, or of the name.'

'No, ma'am, you never saw us together ; he used to come the back way.'

'But I don't recollect any family of that name in the village.'

'No, ma'am, he was a stranger there. He didn't come down till after you took me down with you from London. He was sent down by the London contractor as a carpenter, when the new hall was being finished.'

'Are you acquainted with any one else in London who knows the village?'

'No, ma'am.'

'Have you ever seen any one else who knows it since you left it?'

'Only—only—you know, ma'am, the middle-aged gentleman.'

'Mr. —'

Mrs. Spike glanced significantly at Matthew, and said hurriedly, 'Yes.'

'Was the meeting accidental?'

'Oh, he knew my address always, and for the last three years he has seen me every day.'

'Did he ever mention me?'

'Not until very lately, and then he asked me if I knew your address.'

'Where is he?'

Mrs. Spike in reply again looked significantly at Matthew, and whispered something in the other's ear.

'I cannot stop any longer now,' said the manageress, 'but I will see you again.'

'Don't let me be in the way,' observed Matthew; 'I am going myself.'

And he would have gone before, but that the new visitor standing against the door, and absorbed in her conversation with Mrs. Spike, had not noticed the hint that he had given her by a movement across the room, that he wished to pass.

'Not on my account, sir, I beg,' she said; 'I am really obliged to go now. Sarah, you will say a word to your husband, and I will see you again.'

'Have you to go far, ma'am?'

'Only to the "Pilgrims' Rest."'

'To the "Pilgrims' Rest," ma'am!'

'Yes. Will you come there to-morrow and see me?'

'Yes, ma'am, and I'll see you safe there now; these streets are not at all fit for you to be walking in late at night. I will come with you.'

'I will not hear of such a thing, Sarah; you cannot leave the house, with your husband in that state.'

'I am going to call on my way back, at the "Pilgrims' Rest" for some friends of mine I left there,' said Matthew. 'Will the lady permit me to see her safe home?'

'Thank you, sir, very much indeed,' said Mrs. Rawlins, with something of eagerness, as Matthew thought, in her acquiescence. 'I certainly should be very glad of your protection.'

Outside, she opened the conversation at once.

'If anything would make one long for the country, these streets would,' said she.

'They are not agreeable, are they?'

'You like the country,' she resumed.

'Professional life, like mine, must in most cases be for the most part passed in towns.'

'But you like the country better than the town?'

'In the outskirts of some cities you can enjoy town and country combined.'

'But is there anything so agreeable as a real country life in England?'

'One's predilections for places depend so much on persons.'

He had thus fenced with her interrogations, because four forced remarks in succession on the subject of the country had made him suspect that she had a design in leading the conversation in that direction; if she persisted, it would be clear that she had not chosen the subject idly.

'Perhaps you do not know much of country life in England,' she continued.

He was convinced now that she had a hidden object in her questions; and, remembering Mrs. Spike's significant looks at him during her conversation with the manageress, he could not help thinking that the latter part of their conversation had reference to the dead man whom he had so recently discovered to be his father.

'On the contrary,' he said, 'I know a good deal of English country life.'

'What parts of England are you acquainted with?' she asked.

'They vary so much.'

'Several parts.'

'The west is pretty; do you know that at all?'

He thought of what Jack Gurgyle had said about Broodley Waters, near the Severn, and in answering 'Yes,' wondered if she would presently come to that.

'Good evening, Mr—What's-yer-name?'

Turning round he saw Mr. Raymond Filps, the auctioneer, who seemed for the moment to have escaped from the excitement of making money, and to have given himself up to enjoyment; for he stood quietly regarding them with a broad smile upon his countenance; but with a meaning in it that nettled Matthew.

'Been enjoying a pleasant walk?' he inquired, with a still more meaning look at the manageress.

She bid Matthew a hurried good-night and hastened on. Matthew would have passed on too, but Mr. Filps observed,—

'I say, Mr. Bagnall—or Bernock, ain't it?—when are you goin' to deliver up possession?'

'When you please; you know my terms.'

'They're too high.'

'I thought you had agreed to them. But I can wait till you have. Good-night.'

'Stop—will you give me possession within a week?'

'Yes. I will be there with the key whenever you are ready to settle on the terms I have named,' replied Matthew, walking off.



'I wonder what he's up to walking out at night with the manageress of the "Pilgrims' Rest,"' mused Mr. Filps. 'I'll make a note of that.'

And he did so; and then, seeming suddenly to recollect that his time was precious, hustled off and hailed a cab, as if it was high time to be doing something at somebody else's expense.

Matthew, pressing forward in the hope of overtaking the manageress, suddenly found himself close behind Mr. Peevers and the man with the smile. Not caring to trouble himself with any remark to the former, he fell back a pace or two, and then crossing the street, entered the 'Pilgrims' Rest' without being observed by either of them. Beginning already himself to feel the effects of what he had drunk, it was no more than he expected to find Mr. Gurgyle unsteady both in his speech and in his bearing.

---

## CHAPTER XXIX.

'HERE I am!' exclaimed the latter, with a slight dying-away of his words into each other; 'deserted by all, and left alone to look my future in the face by myself.'

'What has become of Lenny and Chipples?' asked Matthew.

'Lenny, in full burst for the presidential chair of the Academy, is gone to some neighbouring pot-house to study another type; this time in the person of one of Mr. Chipples' acquaintances: with a particularly villainous leer, and a highly characteristic shamle, as well as a fine old battered hat. But come, drink. I say, one of you there with a key of the cellar! fill up here, if you please.'

'Could Chipples tell you anything in confirmation of your surmise about the manageress?' Matthew inquired.

'Cunning old rascal! he can, I believe, but he won't. What have you been doing with that toper, Spike, all this time?'

'Seeing him home: he is Richard's father, you know; and his wife—a good, kind soul—saw after my poor—uncle's house.'

'Ah, yes; such a good fellow, you are, Mat! but what's become of this wonderful manageress, I wonder?'

Though Matthew's brain was beginning to grow a little uncertain, yet he had reflected that the manageress had apparently a secret to guard, and that her visit to Spike's was probably connected with this, and he therefore resolved to say nothing of it, even to his friend; for the present, at least. While he was turning over some commonplace in rejoinder to Jack's remark, she entered the bar-room. He noticed a quick look of recognition in her eyes, but she did not approach him.

'A mystery, Mat,' stuttered Mr. Gurgyle; 'but I think I could tell her something she—'

'Hush! she will hear you.'

'All right ; you'll come home with me, and then I'll tell you her history, or some of it, if I have not made a great mistake ; and I'll show you a portrait of her twenty years ago, though she doesn't look as old as that would make her out to be, certainly. But, here, one of you keepers of the keys ! fill these glasses again, and keep your eyes on them, and every time you see them empty, fill them ; and don't look at us as though we were drunk. I never try to get drunk myself, and my friend couldn't get drunk if he tried.'

The manageress turned to look as this was said, and then suddenly, very perceptibly, started, and the blood left her lips again ; but Matthew now saw that she was looking over his friend's shoulder. Following the direction of her eyes, he saw on one of the frosted glass door-panels, which, while shaded within by the lobby, received the full glare of a large overhanging lamp outside, a distinct shadow of the strongly marked profile of that notable light of temperance, Mr. Peevers. This temporary silhouette the next instant vanishing from the face of the panel, she turned slowly and unconcernedly round towards the door by which she had entered from the room behind. At the same moment he heard the door behind him softly opened, and in the opposite mirror he saw the face, not of Mr. Peevers, but of the man with the smile, regarding her as she retired from the bar.

As she withdrew, so did the man with the smile, and neither he nor the shadow of himself or of Mr. Peevers was seen again that night. All this seemed to Matthew, in his present state, curiously like a dream, and he had to make an effort to rouse himself to be sure that it was not.

'Jack,' he said to his friend, who he saw had not seen what had just passed, 'if you think that woman has any secret to guard, don't talk about it.'

'All right, old man ; I'll tell you all I think I know about her when I get home, but I won't tell any one else. But why do you caution me all of a sudden ?'

'You don't know what bloodhounds she may have on her track ; the thought just occurred to me.'

'Ah !' exclaimed Mr. Gurgoyle, with a heavy sigh, partly despondent and partly sleepy, 'they cause a lot of bother, women do ; heart-ache, old man, heart-ache ; and they make the strong man a child again. Here, you compounder of fusel-oil and vitriol !' he broke off, turning to the landlord, who had just re-entered the bar, 'tell one of your chemical friends there to leave frothing up that copperas, and bring fresh glasses.'

'Are these gents intoxicated ?' thundered the landlord to his smart young men. 'We can't allow no drunkenness 'ere.'

'They haven't been making any noise, sir,' replied one of the smart young men ; and then in a lower tone he whispered something. The landlord scanned them over, not without an air of approval, and swallowed the affront.

'Gents can have what they like,' he said, 'but we have to keep order here.'

'Well, keep order on something to drink,' observed Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Don't mind if I do,' said the landlord, graciously accepting the offer. 'What shall it be?'

'Whatever you like,' replied Mr. Gurgoyle, laughing at the accommodating spirit of this inquiry; 'anything from a bottle of blacking to a dozen of champagne; but no toast-and-water, mind.'

Mr. Juniper condescended to smile at this little pleasantry, rejoining,—

'Well, I'll take a soda and brandy then. No, no; there's none o' them tricks 'ere. If I take a glass with a gent, I take it; and if I don't want it, I say so. Good 'ealth, gents! Three first-rate tables upstairs,' he added, 'if you'd like a game, and a good skittle ground below—'

'And a handsome barmaid behind the counter,' added Mr. Gurgoyle, with a hiccup.

'There must be a woman to look after one part of the concern,' you know,' said the landlord; 'and there's no Missis, and the old mother can't get about now. Yes, she isn't altogether just like what you may call the common order of the 'ands we employ as a rule.'

'No, not if I know anything about her,' observed Mr. Gurgoyle.

Matthew pressed his foot.

'You've known her before, then?' returned the landlord. 'And where might that have been, if I may ask?'

'Not in London,' replied Mr. Gurgoyle.

Matthew again pressed his foot.

'In the country, then? I knew her in the country. Which part might you have known her in?'

'You never heard of such a place as Broodley Waters, did you?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyle, with that burlesque of unfathomable as-uteness which intoxication sometimes puts on. 'All right, Mat, I know what I am about.'

'I know Broodley Waters,' said the landlord, with a scrutinising look of suspicion at Mr. Gurgoyle; 'but I don't remember ever seeing you there. Perhaps I might remember the name.'

'My name is Jack,' replied Mr. Gurgoyle, with a look that was intended to defy penetration.

'I know a Mr. Jack,' observed the landlord; 'but he never lived, as far as I know, at Broodley Waters, and I don't recollect any one else of that name living there, or anywhere near there. You have lived there, you say?'

'I didn't say so,' replied Mr. Gurgoyle, with a hiccupping laugh.

'Ah, you've only been there?'

'I didn't say I'd been there either,' rejoined Mr. Gurgoyle, with the air of a sphinx.

'I thought you said you'd known Mrs. Rawlins at Broodley Waters.'

'I didn't, either, say that I had known Mrs. Rawlins anywhere.'

'Oh, no offence meant,' rejoined the landlord, who now saw that Mr. Gurgoyne was a little more drunk than he had thought. 'It's nothing to me what you know of Mrs. Rawlins or what you don't know.'

But, dulled by liquor as Matthew himself was, he could plainly see that what Mr. Gurgoyne had said had excited a strong feeling of curiosity or suspicion in the landlord's mind.

'But you knew the lady yourself at Broodley Waters, didn't you now?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyne, with a portentous wink.

'I never said I did,' replied the landlord. 'I had you that time!'

'Jack,' whispered Matthew, leaning up against his friend, 'be careful of what you are talking about. If you begin to talk about other people's antecedents on mere surmise, you risk being insulted. The lady, of course,' he continued to the landlord, 'is known to many gentlemen, and my friend has heard her name mentioned.'

'Oh, I don't want to pump no one,' said the landlord; 'and I ain't goin' to be pumped by no one.'

And he emptied his glass and moved to the other end of the bar, slightly discomposed.

### CHAPTER XXX.

'OH these women—these women!' exclaimed Mr. Gurgoyne, in apparent anguish. 'They upset everything!'

'But this Mrs. Rawlins has done you no harm, Jack?'

'No, but another of her sex has.'

'Who? You are not serious, Jack, about Pattie?'

'Mat, old man,' replied Mr. Gurgoyne solemnly, 'keep it dark; but I am hit. I can't get her out of my thoughts.'

'Well, you must win her.'

'But how?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyne, drawing two freshly filled glasses towards them.

'First of all, by commencing to leave off this habit,' answered Matthew. 'Not to-night, and not all at once,' he continued, as if in excuse for emptying his own glass at the same moment. 'But you must make up your mind to it, as I am doing, and then leave it off gradually but surely, and then you must work.'

'But I can't ask a woman to marry me, like a workman advertising for a job, on the ground that I am a sober and industrious hand.'

'But if you keep steady you will make better way in the world.'

'But Pattie will have money from old Harkles; everybody knows that.'

'All the better for you; but you must try and provide a home and a moderate income of your own for her.'

'But I have got to make her like me, old man. It's neither the barber nor the tailor can make her do that.'

'You must show yourself worthy of her.'

'I shall never succeed with her,' said Mr. Gurgoyne with despondency; 'and if I don't, I shall jump into the river.'

'You shall win her, Jack, if it lies in my power.'

Under the glamouring effect of what he had drunk, his influence over Pattie ceased to be a matter of inward reproach; and the hidden pride of power began to make itself felt.

'I will make love to her for you myself,' he cried, with a boisterous laugh.

'No, no!' exclaimed Mr. Gurgoyne. 'I'll do that for myself. But, still, I know you are on friendly terms with her; and so don't make me out worse than I am.'

'You will have to mend your ways vastly, Jack, or I am afraid I shall make you out to be a great deal better than you are.'

'Well, don't hear me run down too much in her presence; and,' continued Mr. Gurgoyne obligingly, 'I'll speak a word for you to Kate.'

'Thank you, Jack; but there is no reason to believe that she would care to have any one speak a word to her in my favour.'

'Gad, no, Mat! I think she would much sooner hear you speak the word yourself.'

'Come, it's time to go,' said Matthew; 'and now I'll see you safe home, Jack.'

'No,' replied Mr. Gurgoyne, staggering into the fresh air; 'it's you who are drunk to-night, Mat—I'll see *you* home.'

'Very well,' said Matthew. 'We don't live far apart now. We will see each other home—as far as your door.'

'All right; that's fair. Give me your arm,' answered Mr. Gurgoyne; and he took the arm of a passer-by, and was walking off with him, when the latter snatched himself away, and rushed across the street, moved by the fear that he had fallen into bad hands.

An unlooked-for consequence of this was that Mr. Gurgoyne fell on the pavement. Calling a cab, Matthew took him carefully home. When at length he had seen him, not without difficulty, into bed, he said, laughingly,—

'Well, good-bye, Jack. Don't fall out of bed.'

'Good-night, Mat,' replied Mr. Gurgoyne drowsily. 'I'll show you the picture, and tell you the story to-morrow Good-night; good—'

Matthew put out the light, and went softly down into the street.

'What is he doing with himself?' he murmured. 'Ruining himself with drink, as I shall be ruined, and everybody else who comes in contact with me. God, what a fool I am, to play with my time thus!—to be at the beck and call of those whom I should lead! I

turned over my twentieth or hundredth new leaf this morning, and this is how it is finishing! Never mind; I must begin again to-morrow.'

Strengthened with which resolution, he thought he might turn aside at a house which he knew, to see just one game of cards played; and so he did not reach his own door the next morning until five o'clock was striking.

---

## CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN he awoke, it was with the old familiar anger and despair,—anger with himself for the night's folly, and despair about all that was before him.

First came the thought of Kate, and he sprang on to the floor, with arms upstretched, and eyes and mouth fixed in remorse and hopelessness. And yet this was only the feverish desperation of a fit of drunkenness which had ebbed out. Cause, indeed, he had to fear—for it is the dread need of every one to walk in fear, and in deadly fear; but there was nothing in his case for a strong man to quail at. He was sound in health, and still young,—not narrowly versed in either books or men, and so able in his profession, that he had a fair prospect of competence before him; but the alcohol, which had strung him up the night before to the highest hope, now left him a poor thing of broken courage, trembling at every thought, as it leaves every one who trusts to it as a staff.

He thought of his income, and he imagined the smile of disparagement with which any guardian would hear him make a proposal of marriage; he thought of his book-learning, and it seemed to him that it was all disappearing; he thought of his varied experiences, and he asked himself what they had done for him; he thought of his profession, and he was conscious of how plausibly a charge of want of attention could be urged against him; he thought of the dark courses of his life, and he cowered, as it were, at himself.

He dared not hope, when he might well have hoped; for he had reached that point in the path of wisdom where self-distrust begins. But he had not gone far enough yet; his self-distrust at present was only occasional, and given to much slumber; it was necessary that it should be quickened into sleepless vigilance.

Forcing himself to eat something—for he feared a further lapse back into bodily faintness—he started for his work. Half-way on his walk, he turned to get one glass of something to drink—just one glass—without which it seemed impossible to keep his hand steady enough for work; but, with one more struggle forward in the path of so many lost steps, he denied himself, and hurried on.

Braced by the exercise and the fresh air, and cheering himself for the hundredth time with the thought that he had really now

made a beginning of what would last, he arrived at Mr. Chamfer's, still low and regretful, but dangerously ready to mount in an instant to the contemplation of everything that was bright in the future, and to forget for the time all the threatening darkness that was close about him.

Standing at the door a moment, he was informed by Richard, who had whistled to him from the area to attract his attention, that Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp were gone out for the day. He had been in unpleasant expectation of having to enter into a business with these gentlemen, which, in his present state of feeling, he was glad to avoid. Accordingly, his cheerful mood was promoted still further by this piece of information. For it seems that on such trifles often depend the mood of the hour; and in the apparently fortuitous mood of the hour the beginning of many and potent turns of life often take their rise.

So on entering the passage where the lugubrious Dante scowled at the irritable Milton, and perceiving the beautiful face of Pattie smiling at him from behind a door, he felt a warm rush of pleasure; and thus, instead of accepting her joyous look of invitation to a chat with the circumspect sense of hard duty which the sad and apprehensive mood induces, he yielded to the graciousness of her welcome, and began inwardly to excuse himself from the cruel task he had before him, as something which might, and ought, to be postponed until an exactly suitable moment. He appeased his crying duty by resolving to be very careful.

Pattie, who had not yet spoken, retired into the room, and stood hesitating, as if wondering what his greeting would be. It was the first time they had been alone since the morning when Mr. Stopp had interrupted them.

'How are you this morning?' inquired Matthew, taking her hand.

She only smiled, and for an instant a shade came across her face. She was trembling with nervousness, and, apparently to get time to compose herself, said,—

'There is a slip of writing for you from uncle on his table, and a letter from Mr. Gurgoyle,' and she fetched them for him.

The slip from Mr. Chamfer was an imperative command to get a certain drawing finished in time for that evening's post.

'Mr. Gurgoyle is gone off suddenly into the country,' said Pattie, handing him the letter.

It hastily informed him that the writer was suddenly packed off on professional business into the country, and that he did not know exactly when he should return.

And so the alleged portrait of the manageress of the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' and the story connected with her, were to remain unknown to Matthew for the present at least.

Mr. Gurgoyle concluded his letter with a moving appeal to Matthew to do what he could for him with Pattie, and a strong injunction

to give him instant information of the approach of anybody giving the least signs of appearing in the character of a rival; touching whom, Mr. Gurgoyle added threats of a most serious nature, followed, however, in a postscript by a highly disparaging estimate of himself, and by the expression of a doubt whether he had a right to stand in the way of any more deserving individual's happiness, and whether, after all, he ought not to rid himself and the world of a useless burden by going and hanging himself at once.

---

CHAPTER XXXII.

DISAGREEABLY reminded by the perusal of this letter of his own delicate position with Pattie, and of the certain inference of treachery which would be drawn by his friend Jack if this position, by any untoward accident, became known to the latter, he felt the cold shadow of duty fall once more across his spirits. He strung himself up to the performance of his task then and there, and abstractedly set himself down at some distance from Pattie, and without looking at her. She looked at him in wonder, and came and sat down near him, and gazed at him with her handsome eyes.

'What is the matter?' she asked, with the tenderest intonation of that rich voice of hers. 'How pale and worn you look.'

'I was up rather late last night.'

'With whom?—where?' she asked, with unconcealed suspicion.

'A men's party—playing cards,' he replied.

'Then you were very wrong,' she replied, with equally unconcealed relief. 'You know you are to take very great care of yourself. Let me give you a little brandy. You don't know how pale you look.'

And she went to a sideboard and brought him a tray, with water and brandy. He thought his nerves must be steady if he would perform his task with the calmness and delicacy which it required. So he took some of what was offered.

'All that brandy to such a little water!' she exclaimed, and her beautiful mouth and eyes broke half into real wonder and half into playful reproach.

He was looking at her as she turned; he noticed the healthful set of her back, the full shapeliness of bust, the soft regularity of profile, and especially the pose of chin and throat; and he wondered if she knew how beautiful she was.

'I suppose,' she continued, 'they are beginning to make much of you at your new lodgings already?'

He thought of the cold, uncared-for lodging he had just left, and smiled.

'So that you will soon grow tired of those stolen chats of ours. I was beginning to despair, and I dreaded soon to see the lamps lit; and then the long dreary evening would have set in, and the day



would have passed without my seeing you again ; but at last I caught sight of you, and then I thought how pleased you would be to find me here alone ; and then, instead of that, you come in so pale and sad, and looking as though you wished I was not in your way.'

Was it that such a tale had been told in his looks ? He would not have wounded her for worlds ; and, moved by his feelings, and warmed by the brandy, he took her hand. It seemed to him that he knew her character thoroughly ; and he thought again to himself, as he had thought before, that the inclination she discovered for him was owing, not to any deep and permanent feeling of preference, but only to the strong yearning of her nature to show tenderness and to receive it, and to the circumstance that he was the only one hitherto entering into her daily life with whom she found such an exchange possible. She seemed to him to be a girl who would love any one who loaded her with deep and unvarying tenderness ; and he believed that Jack Gurgyle would do this, for he was of a faithful and amiable disposition, and with such an object as the love of a woman like Pattie, he would, no doubt, take to a steady life and make way in his profession. And so, on the whole, Matthew began to take a cheerful view of the case, and thought now that he need not be in a hurry with his unpleasant task, since, if Pattie and Jack were thrown together a little more, it would become much easier and, perhaps, not necessary at all ; and his spirits rising on, as he believed, a calmer and more reasonable view of things, but really under the influence of the brandy, he reached his glass and drank again.

'I hope,' said Pattie, 'you will always be on your guard against that.'

'It's certainly a thing to be afraid of.'

'Why don't you make a resolution against it ?'

'A resolution of that sort is not easily kept.'

'Why ?'

'The beginning is difficult.'

'Why ?'

'The systems of persons habituated to the use of stimulants, and especially of persons who use the brain a great deal, sink down frightfully if the stimulants are disused suddenly, that is, frightfully for a time.'

'Then why not let them be disused gradually ?'

'If that were attempted, the chances are that they would not be disused at all.'

'Why ?'

'The confidence given by moderation for a time would ensure the further continuance of their use.'

'Then why not leave off suddenly, and make up your mind manfully to endure this frightful sinking, which you yourself say is only for a time ?'

'It is very difficult to begin that endurance. For instance, if one is by himself while suffering under the depression I speak of, he thinks there is no danger in one glass when no one is present to urge him to take another; and reflecting that there can be no need to put himself to unnecessary pain, he yields to the gradual method. If he finds himself, with this depression weighing on him in company, he feels it difficult to be his usual self with his friends, and fears, perhaps, in a persistent excuse for not drinking, to make himself disagreeable; and so, once more yielding to self-cosening, he argues that his proposed total abstinence being only a matter of promise to himself, there is no necessity to be unpleasantly punctilious with himself by commencing it then and there, and so, here too, he gives way to the procrastinating method.'

'But I thought,' resumed Pattie, 'that in these days drunkenness was a thing almost entirely limited to the working classes—I mean, those who work with their hands.'

'Not at all,' replied Matthew. 'There are immense numbers of young men—not to speak of older men—belonging to every one of the classes above those you refer to, who drink every week, one time with another, quite enough to entitle them to be included in the class of absolute drunkards. Of course, they would be very much astonished at being so designated. If they ever do think anything at all about the subject, they think that every day of excess with them is a day of exception. But it might startle them to have calculated for them the number of nights in the year on which they go to bed the worse—much worse than they have any idea of—indeed dangerously, though unconsciously the worse, for liquor, and what it has cost them in money. These classes of young men are accustomed to hear a great deal of talk about habitual intemperance in connection with the working classes; but they seem quite unconscious of the charge being capable of extension in their own direction.'

'But, Mat, the greater number of persons belonging to these classes you speak of are habitually temperate, are they not?'

'Yes, perhaps so; but they boast of this abstinence from strong drink as a great virtue on their part. Now, many of them are so constituted that, so far from deriving any pleasure, immediate or otherwise, from the free use of strong liquors, they would be made immediately uncomfortable by it. They avoid a positive and immediate pain, and call doing that temperance. It is for them only to boast who avoid drink, not as a pain, but as a very strong and pleasing temptation.'

'But if you really think that you *are* in danger from this temptation, don't you intend to make an effort to avoid it?'

'Yes, I seriously intend doing so,' replied Matthew, 'and I intend avoiding it by leaving it off totally by the sudden method. But,' he continued, emptying his glass, 'it is difficult to keep such a

promise made to one's self: it is difficult, when an obligation to one's self is to be fulfilled at the cost of positive pain, to always bear in mind a sufficient motive for enduring the pain.'

---

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

'WELL, now, enough of myself,' he said. 'I want to talk to you about yourself.'

She looked up into his eyes with such an outburst of fervent love as could not, even under the easy view he had just commenced to take of the affair, but cut him to the soul.

'This is the first time we have been alone together, Pattie, since Stopp disturbed us the other day.'

She flushed scarlet in an instant.

'Did Stopp hear anything, do you think?'

'Why do you seem so anxious about it?' she asked, with sudden quickness, and she looked at him with scrutiny.

'On your account, Pattie.'

'I don't know whether he heard anything before we heard him,' she returned; 'but he must have mentioned seeing us together, because uncle scolded me dreadfully about it. I don't think Mr. Stopp did hear anything before we heard him, because he would have told uncle, and uncle would have been furious with me. No; I don't think he did.'

'From what you say, I don't think he did,' said Matthew. 'I hope not.'

'Why?' she asked, with a little more scrutiny this time.

'I am thinking of you.'

'Why need we care?' she said. 'Uncle is not at all kind to me; and we are both old enough to act for ourselves.'

And he could see her beautiful throat gurgling with a laugh.

'But listen,' he began, in some confusion, and trying to steady his thoughts. 'Do you know, Pattie, it is very important to you—to us—that is, to you—that Stopp should not have heard or seen anything?'

'Is it?'

'Pattie—'

He was trying to go on, when the door-bell was heard to ring, and in a few moments Kate stood before them, with her transparent skin quickened by the outside air, and her brilliant eyes beaming with expectancy. She saw Matthew and the decanter, and a shade fell across her face.

'Where is uncle?' she asked, with just a glance at Pattie.

'Out for the day,' answered Pattie, with alarm in her looks and voice.

'I came to ask you to go for a walk with me,' continued Kate; 'but I did not know you were engaged.'

'Don't let me delay you,' said Matthew, placing a chair for her. 'I have some work to attend to at once.'

'I thought I should find you dressed for your usual walk by yourself, Pattie,' she continued; 'but don't trouble now, it would be almost too late by the time you were dressed, and the streets are rather dull, and I don't care for a walk now.'

It pained him to see that she was offended; but his pain was accompanied by a welcome suspicion of what he yet dared not believe was the truth. Could it indeed be true that it could cause her disquiet to find him and another woman alone in conversation? Such was the straw of hope that his despondent love snatched at.

'Oh, do come, Kate darling!' implored Pattie. 'I should so like a walk with you.'

'Let me venture to support that appeal,' said Matthew. 'You will have the sun for a good two hours yet, and even the short walk here has evidently done you good. Your eyes and complexion look more brilliant than ever.'

This freedom of his was owing to the brandy, as she surmised; notwithstanding she darted a swift glance at the mirror.

'Well, be quick, then, and dress, Pattie,' she said, 'if you really want a walk.'

'There's a darling!' cried Pattie, throwing her arms about Kate's neck. 'And Mr. Bernock can come with us.'

'Pattie!' exclaimed Kate, 'these are Mr. Bernock's hours of business. I think we had better not go for a walk after all.'

So it appeared to him that the straw of hope was only a straw, and he began to sink again.

'Thank you very much for your kindness,' he said to Pattie, 'but I have something to do which will occupy me for three hours at the least, and which I must attend to at once. So good-bye, and a pleasant walk to you. Good day, Miss Kate.'

'Good day,' returned Kate. She was letting him go without looking at him, but suddenly turning towards him, she continued,— 'Mr. Gurgyle was in too great a hurry to catch his train this morning to give an account of Lenny's new home, so grandpa is looking for a full report from you, Mr. Bernock.'

'I shall hope to find him at home this evening then,' said Matthew, with a look of gratitude.

He had caught at another straw, but this time it was a bigger one. This scene with Kate had ended happily; and a bottle smuggled in by Richard in the innocent-looking roll of drawings, kept up the cheerful view of how easily poor Pattie was to be extricated from the situation in which she had been allowed to find herself.

He went in the evening to the 'Golden Sheaf,' and caught at more straws, notwithstanding the renewed doubt into which he was thrown by seeing, as he entered, Kate being again held in conversation at the top of the stairs by the man with the smile.

And many more evenings he spent there, catching at more straws

still, while watching every going in and coming out of Kate, and anxiously pondering everything that she said or that was said about her, and being thrown like a shuttlecock from hope to fear, and from fear to hope.

Of all the many causes of disquiet that he was tormented by, the worst was the occasional glimpse he got of that persistent man with the smile, whom it girded him to see on terms of apparent intimacy with Kate, and yet about whom he dared not question a soul; for his love at present was shamefaced, and to ask a question prompted by it would have been to him like proclaiming his secret from the house-tops.

And Pattie had still to be undeceived.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

ONE memorable night—some days after he had gathered from a remark let fall in a conversation between Kate and Pattie, that the man with the smile was gone into the country—on turning under the neatly sanded archway of the 'Golden Sheaf,' Matthew found Richard standing on the white steps leading to the quarters where Kate and her grandfather were generally to be found.

'Well, Richard?' inquired Matthew.

'The Old Un's on again; and My Bloke's there, and won't go.'

'Where is Miss Kate?'

'In the parlour.'

Going into this room, Matthew found that pillar of temperance, Mr. Peevers, sitting there, eating a supper of beef and pickles in a manner that was neither temperate nor elegant.

'How d'ye do?' muttered Mr. Peevers, with his mouth inconvenienced by what it was dealing with, in reply to Matthew's salutation. 'Want to see the proprietor of this respectable establishment? He's down there;—drunk as usual.'

And he nodded towards an open sliding-window which was used as a means of surveying the adjacent bar without leaving the room.

'I can't think,' continued Mr. Peevers, reloading his plate with beef, and bringing his teeth together upon a large, pickled onion with a rapidity and noise which caused an over-fed dog, sleeping on the hearth-rug, to look up with an air of being shocked,—'I can't think how the country can quietly submit to government after government coming in and never taking a step towards checking people in the beastly habit of indulging their appetites.'

With which sentiment Mr. Peevers threw himself once more upon what he had before him with such earnestness that the over-fed dog rose up on his haunches and regarded him with astonishment.

Matthew, looking down through the sliding window, saw Mr. Harkles maintaining a tottering seat on a stool behind the bar,

engaged, to the marked pleasure of his usual nightly audience, in an interchange of exasperating remarks with Mr. Spike, who was steadying himself against the counter on the other side.

'I'm an ill-used man,' lamented Mr. Harkles, shaking his head from side to side with an air of brooding misery, and in consequence thwarting himself in an attempt to apply his glass to his lips. 'Not allowed to drink what I like behind the bar, and insulted by the public in front of it.'

'Why, I'm blessed if the Old Un ain't drunk!' exclaimed Mr. Spike, himself lurching back in trying to do without the support of the counter. 'He can't find his own mouth. I say, guv'nor, shall I drink it for you?'

'Insulted by the public in front of it,' continued Mr. Harkles. 'And yet I always act like a man—like a MAN!'

In the utterance of which assertion, pronounced in a tone that made all the glasses on the shelves ring again, Mr. Harkles rose to his feet for additional emphasis, but relapsed the next instant on to the stool.

'A MAN!' shouted Mr. Harkles, and he closed his eyes and slowly rolled his head from side to side in silence, as if the ecstasy of admiration, induced by the contemplation of himself as a MAN, was too much for him.

'So you are, guv'nor,' observed a customer, whose nose seemed to have enlarged itself for the purpose of drawing away the colour from all the rest of his countenance.

'And right you are, old Grog-blossom!' exclaimed Mr. Harkles. 'I always look upon you as having a few more grains of sense than the others, though I must say you do give way to drink too much.'

Grog-blossom regarded the bottom of his emptied beer-pot, and looked inquiringly at one of the young men behind the bar.

'No more tick-to-night,' said the latter. 'You have one put down on score already.'

Grog-blossom looked in appeal at Mr. Harkles.

'Can't I have another put down on score, guv'nor?' he pleaded.

'Oh yes,' replied Mr. Harkles, 'if you like. But,' he continued, with the habitual circumspection of the landlord coming over him for a moment, 'only one, and you will wipe it all off on Saturday.'

'All right, guv'nor,' replied Grog-blossom, and taking the new-filled measure from the barman, he observed to the company in reference to the latter, 'I hates coves as are too fast, and as interferes between friends.'

'Friends!' shouted Mr. Harkles. 'I *am* a friend. But I want kindness. I'm kind myself—I'm too kind; but if you prick me, I bleed. Don't prick me, and I'm your friend.' Suddenly, he continued, as if by inspiration, 'I *am everybody's friend but my own*,' and then, struck with admiration of what he had said, he nearly choked himself with laughter. 'There! who would have thought I

should say that !—I don't know where these things come from : it's natural to me, I suppose.'

'All right, guv'nor ; don't choke yourself,' said Mr. Spike ; 'come here, and I'll pat your back for you. You take care, old man, or you'll go into a fit with one of these funny sayings of yours.'

'Fit ?' repeated Mr. Harkles reflectively ; 'the doctor told me yesterday I should go off in a fit if I didn't mind.'

'With drink,' remarked Mr. Spike, 'and no wonder. Now he couldn't have said that of me, because, though there's no denyin' I often go as far as I dare, I always stop at the right moment.'

'That's when your money's all gone, ain't it ?' observed Grog-blossom, trying a little stroke of wit, in his turn.

'All right, Billy Snip,' replied Mr. Spike, 'I'll attend to you presently ; but, I say, guv'nor, ain't you goin' to let *me* have a pint put down on score ?'

'No,' cried Mr. Harkles, with decision, trying to guide his glass to his lips again ; 'you said I was drunk just now.'

'Come, guv'nor,' said Mr. Spike, 'I didn't say you was drunk now ; only sometimes. Now, I'm goin' to have a pint put down ; ain't I, guv'nor ?'

'No,' shouted Mr. Harkles. 'I won't have any drunkenness here. Spike, you go home.'

'There's an ungrateful old man for you !' exclaimed Mr. Spike, turning to the company ; 'and if it wasn't for me he'd have no one to keep him comp'n'y when he's in the blues, and he'd go and drink hisself to death out of loneliness.'

'Nagged at behind the bar, and insulted by Spike in front,' soliloquised Mr. Harkles, still trying to get his glass to his lips ; 'no missis to take care of me, and no appetite for my meals. It's a dog's life I'm leading, and I wish I was dead. Spike, I'll have you locked up.'

'Well, guv'nor, you're always a-sayin' it ; why don't you do it ?' asked Mr. Spike, putting himself forward with an air of frank surrender. 'Why don't you do it ?'

'Why don't I do it ?' repeated Mr. Harkles reflectively.

'Yes, why don't you do it ?' repeated Mr. Spike tauntingly.

Mr. Harkles seemed puzzled for a reply, but at length he found one.

'What's that got to do with you, Spike ?' he inquired.

Mr. Spike now seemed puzzled in his turn for a reply, and, being pressed by his opponent, evaded it by saying,—

'But, I say, guv'nor, ain't I going to have a pint put down to me on score to-night ?'

'No !' shouted Mr. Harkles ; 'it's my own house, and from to-night I'm going to do as I like in it.'

'Quite right, guv'nor,' observed Grog-blossom, who was getting to the bottom of his measure again ; 'quite right ; why shouldn't you ?'

'Oh, we know what you're up to, Billy Snip,' said Mr. Spike, with derision. 'You're making up to the guv'nor for another pint to be put down to you; ain't you?'

'Well, you won't pay for it if I am, will you?' returned Grog-blossom.

This retort stirring up a laugh amongst the other customers, who always regarded any one supported by the 'house' as on the winning side, Mr. Spike took fire.

'But there's something else I'm willing to pay, Billy Snip,' he said. 'There's a long score standing between me and you, and if you want it wiped off in this style, I'm your man.'

Mr. Spike began with the play of his hands to invite the other to battle, but he made the mistake of showing how much he had drunk by giving way to a lurch and a stagger. At first Grog-blossom had blanched at the proposed settlement of the old score, but observing the state his enemy was in he drew himself together, and replied,—

'I could soon put *you* on your back, if that's what you mean.'

Mr. Peevers, in the room above, retiring now from the beef and pickles with a sigh, remarked to Matthew,—

'I came up to settle about a lot of cigars my son-in-law is going to get rid of here; but the old man seems to have been fuddling himself too much with that horrid drink to be able to talk about matters of business.'

Matthew saw nothing in this observation calling for a reply.

'And to talk over matters with the old man,' continued Mr. Peevers, turning to make sure that the other was paying attention, 'about my Jim and Kate. That is to be a match, I suppose?'

Matthew saw nothing in this remark either calling for a reply; but he recognised a great deal which invited his reflection.

'But here,' said Mr. Peevers, 'is the young woman herself.'

## CHAPTER XXXV.

'AND now, Mr. Peevers,' said Kate, coming into the room, 'you must please not enter into any business talk with grandpa to-night, or we shall never get him upstairs. And you know,' she continued with a smile, 'as a temperance man you must do nothing to lead any one into drinking what is not good for him.'

'Oh! but I can't come all the way up here from Camberwell, as I have done to-night, for nothing,' said Mr. Peevers. 'How about them cigars?'

'I will speak to grandpa about them to-morrow,' she replied.

'And now, Mr. Bernock, will you be kind enough to show yourself for a moment at the window, and see if you can attract grandpa up into the room here with us?'



Matthew, being already seated near the open window, did not rise, but merely put his head forward sufficiently to catch the eye of Mr. Harkles, without putting himself entirely on public view.

'What!' shouted Mr. Harkles, and turning suddenly round he caused the attention of Mr. Spike and Grog-blossom, and of every one else, to be directed towards Matthew.

'What! Peeping Tom of Coventry!' he shouted.

The humour of this remark nearly brought Mr. Harkles to the floor, throwing him into a convulsion of laughter, which ended in a paroxysm of coughing.

'I can't imagine how I think of these things,' he gasped, when at length he had recovered himself; 'and it's very foolish of me giving way to such a witty habit, because the laughing brings on the coughing, and the coughing nearly kills me. The doctor said the other day if I didn't get rid of this cough, and kept on drinking, I should choke myself to death some night.'

'Well, you can't do without a little drop, guv'nor, once in a way,' said Grog-blossom, eyeing the bottom of his now emptied measure.

'But I can't eat, and I can't sleep,' soliloquised Mr. Harkles without having heard this observation, 'and then I must have something to keep me up, and one glass leads to another. I know it's wicked, but I can't help it. I have had trouble enough in my life to break a man's heart, and then—and then, there's that Spike always coming here and upsetting me. Go home, Spike, this instant.'

'There's a return for kindness!' replied Mr. Spike. 'And without me you'd go drinkin' yourself to death in a corner, or turnin' into a blubberin' old mummy for want of some one to talk to; but I'm goin' to give you up. That's my gen'l'm'n up in the window there. He offered to stand treat t'other night at the 'Rest,' but I haven't had it yet, and, if he don't mind, I'll drink his health now in a pint of old six.'

'Oh yes, Mr. Mat,' resumed Mr. Harkles, now reminded of Matthew's presence; 'to be sure; what was I going to say to you, sir? Oh, I remember. If I was too free just now, sir, I beg your pardon; because you don't come from Coventry, that I know of, and your name isn't Tom, and you're not in the habit of peeping; but I can't help these witty things coming into my head, you know; where they come from, I don't know: it's a gift, I suppose; but I don't know.'

And Mr. Harkles once again gave up the mystery of the source of his wit with a shake of the head, and nearly fell off his stool.

'You're not offended, are you, sir?' he said, turning his eyes in Matthew's direction, and trying to keep them there.

'Not at all,' replied Matthew with a laugh.

'That's right, that's right: I'm glad to hear you say that; I'm very glad; yes I *am* glad, I'm *very* glad.' And Mr. Harkles continued this expression of his satisfaction with such emphasis that it

was quite clear that he had already forgotten what it was he was so glad about. 'But what *was* it you said, Mr. Mat? but there, it doesn't matter, if you *can't* remember; I'm just like that sometimes myself. I forget things myself sometimes; but, talking of forgetting, I have been trying to remember a riddle I thought of about you. Bless us, what was it?'

'Let's hear it, guv'nor,' said Grog-blossom encouragingly, at the time turning his beer-pot upside down before Mr. Harkles' eyes: 'it's something good, I know.'

'What *was* it?' pondered Mr. Harkles. 'Oh, here it is.'

Grog-blossom put on a look of expectation.

'Why,' began Mr. Harkles, lifting up his forefinger to command undivided attention, and, in steadying himself on his stool, trying to fix his eyes for an instant on Matthew's, 'why are you like—let's see, what was it you were like?'

'Hark back, guv'nor,' said Grog-blossom.

'Billy Snip isn't trying hard to get that pint filled, is he?' exclaimed Mr. Spike with bitterness. 'I wouldn't lower myself like that for all the pints in the world, specially when I've got a gen'l'm'n up there as 'll stand me what I like without askin'.'

'I've got it,' resumed Mr. Harkles, just saving himself again from falling off the stool; 'this is it: why are you—like—a—door?'

Grog-blossom seemed to put it seriously to himself why Matthew was like a door.

'No, that's not it now!' exclaimed Mr. Harkles in correction.

'Let me see—ah, now I have it: why are you—like—a—MAT?'

Grog-blossom, leaning his head upon his hand, appeared to string up his reflective faculty to the last point.

'No, and that isn't it either,' corrected Mr. Harkles once again.

'I have got it wrong somehow. It's something about a door-mat. Don't you see? Don't you see it? Do you mean to say you can't see it. I can; but these things come natural to me. Your name is Mat—don't you see?—Door Mat—ha-a-a-h!'

This time Mr. Harkles' appreciation of his own humour unseated him. Recovered from the paroxysm of coughing following on it, he gathered himself up, and, dropping into a chair, said with a gasp,—

'I don't know how I think of these things: it's a gift, I suppose.'

'So it is, guv'nor!' exclaimed Grog-blossom, bringing his hand down with a thump on the counter. 'It's downright wonderful! But I say, guv'nor, can't I have another pint to-night?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Spike derisively, 'that's what Billy Snip is after, guv'nor. Well, I'm not come down to sponging yet; but when a gen'l'm'n asks me to drink his 'ealth of his own accord, I knows my manners better than to refuse.'

'Well, the gen'l'm'n hasn't asked you *yet*,' retorted Grog-blossom.

In reply to this Mr. Spike threw the dregs of his beer-measure over Grog-blossom, and the latter, observing that his enemy had nearly twisted himself off his feet in the act, and having no dregs in

his beer-measure to throw, answered with the measure itself. Mr. Spike rushed forward, but finding that his legs were not now to be relied on, he changed his intention with regard to his opponent's eyes, and flung his arms round the latter's neck, with the twofold object of temporarily asphyxiating him and of finding support for himself. Grog-blossom defeated both objects by kicking Mr. Spike's feet from under him and falling on the top of him.

'Fetch the police !' Mr. Harkles shouted, and instantly fell off his stool. 'Fetch the police !' he repeated, in picking himself up again. 'I won't have that Spike kicking up rows, and making people throw beer-pots at his head here.'

The waiter sprang over the counter, and ran out for a policeman, with an activity that cleared him of any suspicion of prejudice in favour of Mr. Spike. At the same moment, Matthew saw the shrinking and trembling form of Mr. Chipples emerge from a corner.

'Pray get up, Mr. Spike,' he nervously said. 'Get up, and I'll see you home.'

'You leave him alone,' cried Mr. Harkles, staggering up to the counter ; 'I'll have him locked up for this.'

'No ; let me see him home, Mr. Harkles ; do, sir,' pleaded Mr. Chipples. 'I don't think he has been behaving so very badly, you know, Mr. Harkles, sir, taking the whole evening through.'

'Oh ! so you take his part, do you ?' shouted Mr. Harkles. 'I know why. It's because he's always coming and upsetting me.'

'No, no, my dear sir ; on my honour no, Mr. Harkles ; no, no, sir,' replied Mr. Chipples. 'But he has not really been behaving so very badly, my dear sir.'

'So you *will* take his part, will you ?' returned Mr. Harkles. 'Very well, take care, or I'll have you *both* locked up. I never told you what I knew about you, Chipples. I can have you locked up any day I like.'

Matthew saw that Mr. Harkles was hardly conscious of what he was saying ; but he saw, also, that Mr. Chipples had turned very pale.

'Pray, don't be offended, my dear sir,' nervously pleaded Mr. Chipples.

'Yes, I will,' cried Mr. Harkles, sternly. 'I will, if I like. Ah, here come the police ! Now I'll have you both locked up.'

The door opened, but instead of the police, Richard entered. Having spat into a corner, and given a backward and forward slide to his cap, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, he remarked to his father, in a disinterested tone,—

'Goin' to get up before the bobbies come ? I told them the party was gone up the court ; but they won't be long finding out their mistake.'

Mr. Spike, receiving this piece of information as well intended on the part of his son, accepted the latter's arm, and that of Mr. Chipples, and, accompanied by them, tumbled outside with such

precipitancy that the latter part of a prognostication which he had commenced with regard to what might be expected to befall Grog-blossom's eyes and limbs on the morrow, was borne away, unheard by that person.

'If that Chipples comes here again interfering,' growled Mr. Harkles, 'I'll have him locked up. But I don't see why William wanted to be in such a hurry to go for the police. I don't suppose Spike meant to stop all night.'

And Mr. Harkles, who, now that he had lost the excitement of quarrelling with his habitual opponent, seemed to be thrown back upon his own resources, and not to find them prolific, gave a heavy sigh.

'It's a dog's life, this is,' he muttered; 'and it drives me to drinking—against my own will. I know it's wicked, but I can't help it.'

And he staggered forward to a row of spirit taps.

'No, no, grandpa, you must not go there again!' cried Kate, in an agony of apprehension. 'Come up here, and I will mix the draught for your cough. You must not go there again.'

'I mustn't, mustn't I?' shouted Mr. Harkles. 'And so, no sooner have I recovered from Spike than I am to be browbeaten by you again, am I, Miss? I am to be crossed in everything in my own house, and, I daresay, I am looked upon as a nuisance, and you wish I was out of the way; but you will regret me when it is too late. You will think of me when I am dead and gone, and you are left penniless; for that's how I mean to leave you—that's how I have left you. And what can you expect, when you treat me like this?'

'Grandpa!' murmured Kate. Plain John Harkles stood irresolute, balanced between the force of circumstances and the force of habitual obedience to Kate's wishes. 'Do, pray, come up and sit with me, grandpa,' she entreated.

'No, I won't!' cried Mr. Harkles, with decision. 'I'll go and get drunk somewhere, and get myself locked up, and then you'll have cause for remorse when you reflect on what you have brought me to. I'll go at once. Where's my hat? I'm off this instant to go and get drunk somewhere, and get myself locked up, and be a remorse to you.'

Mr. Harkles was so bent upon putting his purpose into immediate action, that he set off in the first direction which presented itself, and having no regard to the counter intervening in his path, he was thrown, unexpectedly to himself, on to his back. This time, however, he made no attempt to rise again, and it soon becoming apparent that he had lost sight of what he had just resolved on, and that he was disposing himself to take his night's rest where he lay, the powerful ostler was again called in.

Regarding the inert figure, as it was borne through the parlour in the embrace of the muscular stableman, Mr. Peevers exclaimed,—

'Thank the Lord, I'm not like him!'

The other one let his head sink wearily on the ostler's shoulder, and in the dying voice of sleep, murmured,—

'God forgive me for a sinner. I know it's wicked, but I can't help it.'

---

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. PEEVERS now put on his hat, and called after Kate, as she left the room, following in the wake of the ostler and his burden,—

'Well, good-night, and don't forget them cigars.'

Then with the passing remark to Matthew, that, 'He should like to have that scene made a picture of, and hung behind his Jim in the pulpit,' he buttoned up his coat, put his umbrella under his arm, and walked out.

Being left to himself, Matthew resumed the mental contemplation of Kate under the light of the new information he had heard let fall about her.

Not now regarding her remotely, in connection with the occurrence of Harkles' death, and as left in the future without property, he seemed to approach nearer to her in divesting her of all prospect of property in the present; for though it would have revolted him to think of her accepting him on the sole ground of the due proportion of his means to hers, yet he could not, of course, but suppose that that would be a chief consideration with those who had the care of her.

If it was indeed true that she had no wealth, nor prospect of wealth, to be counterbalanced on her husband's side, an offer from one in his position, and with his capabilities in the profession he followed, though it might be declined by her guardians as less than she had reason to expect, could hardly be scouted by them as ridiculous.

But their approval was a small thing without hers. What as to that?

For the hundredth time he called up every word and act of hers which, during their intimacy, he had seized on as an encouragement to himself. Were they the effects of kindness for the moment only, or did they signify the growth of something in her heart which had kept pace with what had so entirely mastered himself?

Each look, each word, each gesture, which in one mood seemed everything, and in another nothing, was examined by itself, and compared with the rest, and turned this way and that with the pain-fullest care. The view he took of these things sometimes depended on the last intonation of her voice, or the last glance of her eye. She had welcomed him this evening with unconcealed pleasure. Accordingly, they now presented themselves to him in the most favourable light.

Should he open his mind to her this very night? With so perturbing a question came the thought that, as she was alone, he could not stop in that room, and at the same moment she came back.

So far from looking surprised to see him still there, she gave him one of her smiles, which always seemed the more radiant because of the accustomed melancholy of her expression.

His face brightened again, and then they fell into a conversation which was deeply interesting to both, for it was wholly about herself.

'But if,' he said, after the talk had gone on for some time, 'if it is really true that you have nothing more than this home to expect during Mr. Harkles' life, and nothing at all after his death, don't you think you are wasting your time and opportunities?'

'I have the satisfaction of feeling that I am doing useful work, in taking care of one who needs care so much,' she said.

'I never cease to wonder at the strange incongruity between yourself and the circumstances which surround you,' he observed. 'You should marry and leave this kind of life.'

'And what would become of my charge?' she asked.

'We would take him with us,' he replied.

She started and blushed—as well she might; and, he feared, with anger.

'Forgive me,' he pleaded. 'The thought took words almost, as they say, before I knew it,—Kate—'

He paused a little too long, for, just as he was going on, Richard came to inquire whether his services would be required for sitting up with Mr. Harkles.

'Yes, if you please, Richard,' she said. 'Go and get your supper, and in the mean time I will go up and see that all is arranged for the night.'

And getting up when the boy was gone, she continued,—

'When Mr. Harkles is unwell, I can depend on Richard for sitting up with him; and Mr. Harkles likes him. By the way, I find the mother, Mrs. Spike, whom you recommended, exceedingly useful, and a very kind, good-hearted woman.'

Then she approached the door, anxious, as Matthew thought, to prevent the conversation being continued.

'I am sorry we were interrupted,' he said. 'I had something to say to you.'

'Had you?'

'Yes; but now you are in such a hurry.'

She came near to him, and looking up into his face, whispered,—

'Tell me to-morrow; I want you to go now.'

She allowed him to take her hand, and then ran upstairs. Looking back as she leant over the hand-rail, she gave him a smile and a nod which were more to him, poor soul, than words.

He went forth overflowing with the joy of promised success, and he wished his friend Jack were there to respond to this new rush of spirit.

Failing Jack, he turned in a direction where he was sure of a warm welcome—all the warmer because he would be expected to pay for it. He would not drink, because his spirits needed no stimulant to-night. He would look on, and talk and be talked with, and that was all.

But no, there must be an end of that now. No more half-measures. No more parleying with Debauchery, on the false ground of self-security, and then wallowing deeper than before. Not to be tricked by Folly, he must avoid her.

Lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil.

And here was Kate sent to keep him from both. Henceforward he would follow the high aspirations which, so far, he had only deceived himself with in thought. His thoughts must now take action. He would now with steps which might falter, but must never go back, follow after the Only Good ; and Kate should be the pure companion of his way. With her he would look to Eternity.

And so on.

In this mood, with well-assured means of living in the future, well-fed, well-clothed, sit certain comfortable Christians at church. The whole duty of man, according to their unexpressed limitation of its meaning—namely, to commit none of those common offences which their condition in life renders unnecessary to their happiness—is not, in the circumstances in which they find themselves, difficult to follow ; and they follow it. Who would risk salvation, if it is to be gained by keeping to the pleasantest path that can be seen immediately under the eye ?

Pursuing these thoughts he laughed at himself. He saw that this most recently inspired yearning after purity sprang from simple selfishness. He was drawn by a beautiful face and form, and by a sweet and intelligent nature. The attraction of such endowments as these was no test of a lofty spirit. The vilest would give signs of feeling the attraction in common with the noblest. If to possess these endowments of another, virtue had to be followed—all well and good—virtue made easy was desirable in every way. Only it was well to recognise, in reflecting on his motive of action, how much was high virtue and how much common selfishness.

Having cooled himself with these reflections, he grew less ecstatic.

As yet only a procrastinating hanger-on of imperfect Christianity—he had, however, this advantage over some : that he had learnt not to be deceived by his own emotions, and especially when they appeared under a religious guise. He had so often seen, in the case of others, single emotions of this kind carried to their extremities ; sometimes with the refined accompaniments of painful devotion, of stern asceticism and even of the severest learning, sometimes sustained only by the vulgarest picturesqueness, sometimes barely recognisable under the grossness of a Peevers ; and he had himself been obliged to modify his first conclusions in so many departments

of opinion, that he had come now to be habitually distrustful of his own feelings, and on all occasions to submit them to analysis.

Having by such a process satisfied himself that he had been very near confounding religion with Kate's attractiveness, he grew calmer still; and began to look far beyond what now seemed about to be the beginning of his worldly happiness. He pondered on the multitude of things which could interrupt it, and how they would need the most unceasing circumspection to avert them.

Might there not be even something which could prevent the very beginning of his anticipated happiness? What could?—who could? Pattie could.

'Poor Pattie!' he murmured to himself. 'What winning ways she has!—and what a beautiful woman!'

And he felt excessively tender about her. He would have liked to keep the overflowing depth of her love in return for his—brotherly affection. He had to confess that much to himself. But no, he must do his—duty!

The *word* itself was an abomination to him. It had been rung in his ears on the cruellest occasions. It was the *word*—as distinguished from the action—of all modern Pharisees, when in the name of *their* justice, or some other of *their* favoured abstractions, they satiated revenge, or leapt at a pretext for beckoning attention to *their* uprightness.

But he must do his—confound the word!—but it was the right one; only the Pharisees had made it detestable. He must undeceive her—no, that would be cruel. She must not be undeceived. She must not know that he did not love her. Kate must keep his love for herself a secret for the present. But he must make Pattie cease to love him; and the first step must be taken at once—to-morrow.

*To-morrow.* If the step had only been taken before. If he had only procrastinated one day less! But with him—as yet—it was ever, to-morrow.

---

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

SITTING at breakfast the next morning, Matthew heard the door behind him opened and shut, but no one spoke. Turning round, he was startled to see Richard standing there.

'Why, Richard!' he exclaimed, and he stayed his hand clasped on a bottle of brandy.

'I was just passing this way,' said Richard; and having stuffed his cap into a pocket of his coat, and his hands into those of his trousers, he advanced to the fire and contemplated it as though that was his only object in coming.

'And so you looked in?' observed Matthew. 'Yes.'

'The Old Un's gone,' remarked Richard.



Matthew turned his eyes on Richard. After a short observation of his visitor, his own face changed.

'Who?' he asked, not moving his eyes.

'The Old Un: the Young Un's gov'nor.'

'Mr. Harkles? Where?—Where is he gone?'

'He's dead.'

Matthew, with his hand still on the bottle, sat thunderstruck.

'Well, he knew what he had to expect,' resumed Richard. 'With all them little nips of his, which he was always showing everybody how small they was; and with that bark of his enough to tear him to pieces; and after all the doctor told him; he knew what he was doing to himself.'

'Poor old governor!' muttered Matthew. 'So soon, too, after—my relative!' he continued, and he corked the bottle, and pushed it from him. 'How did it happen, Richard!'

'He went off to sleep easy enough at first,' said Richard, 'and kept pretty quiet until about two o'clock. Then he began coughing dreadful. I gave him his medicine and put his pillows right, and after a little he got pretty comfortable. But instead of going off to sleep, he begins talking; all about his troubles; what a trial My Bloke was to him; and how the Young Un was always dropping down on him whenever he was going to take just a little drop to keep the life in him.'

'Ah! if he had been guided by her he might have been alive now,' said Matthew.

'Perhaps,' answered Richard. 'Well, he said it was a dog's life he was leading, and he thought he'd go and get married again; and he says: "Richard," he says, "what do you think folks would say if I did?" he says to me. "Guv'nor," I says, "you ain't acquainted with no one, as I know, as would marry you for your own good, and perhaps it might be worse than as if," I says, "you went and drunk yourself to death at once," I says. "Richard," he says, "I'm a-doing that already. I know it's wicked, but I can't help it now," he says. "Guv'nor," I says, "you ought to think about the Young Un, before you begin talking of marrying again?" "Oh, it would make no difference to her whether I married again or not, Richard; but, lord!" he says, "I may be dead before the morning, Richard," he says. Then he had another round with the cough, and come off a good deal knocked out of time. When he picked up, he began with his troubles again, and who do you think he brings in this time?'

Matthew gazed at his visitor without speaking.

'Who do you think?' repeated the boy; and then after a pause he added, 'old Chipples.'

'What did he say about him, Richard?' inquired Matthew, with a touch of eagerness in his voice.

'He said he wasn't going to have none of Chipples' interference, and then let out a secret about him, and said he could ruin him any day.'

'You must be careful, Richard, not to let poor Mr. Chipples be a sufferer by this disclosure. If you take my advice, you won't repeat what you have heard.'

'Not even to you, sir?'

Matthew was caught. The truth was, suspecting that 'shame' of his father's, which Mr. Chipples had referred to with such palpable apprehensiveness, was in some way connected with the latter himself, he felt extremely curious to know what this revelation to Richard was; so, beginning to trifle with his honour, he said—

'Did it in any way concern me, Richard?—if not directly, indirectly;—for instance, through my late—through the gentleman I used to live with?'

'No, it didn't concern neither of you,' replied Richard, unconsciously shutting out Matthew's only excuse for further questioning.

'Then I don't think you ought to repeat it to me any more than to any one else. Be careful to keep it to yourself if you think it would injure Mr. Chipples. But you can bear it in mind.'

'I mean to,' said Richard. Then he continued, 'Well, when the Old Un had talked himself tired about Chipples, he dropped off asleep, and me too. About an hour afterwards, he woke me up with another fit of coughing; and this time it was a tearer. He went on coughing and straining, and choking and rolling about, and me a-patting his back and holding his head, and he a-turning nearly blue in the face. I was just thinking of running for somebody, when all of a sudden he looks at me startled like, tries to lift himself up on his hands and then falls back. I gave a tug at the bell, and bolted off for the Young Un. But he never got back his senses, and at last they said he was dead.'

'Poor old governor!' murmured Matthew.

'Yes, he was a good sort, except for the drink,' observed Richard.

'How does Miss Kate seem to bear it, Richard?—dreadfully upset I fear.'

'Shouldn't wonder; but she keeps cool enough over it: least-ways before them as are there.'

'Who are there, Richard?'

'The two Coves from the office.'

'Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp?'

'Yes, and they have sent for the temp'rance gentleman.'

'Mr. Peevers?'

'Yes, and the Young Un told me to come round and tell you what had happened.'

To Matthew this was like a message of love.

'If the Old Un meant what he always said,' observed Richard, 'it's a bad look-out for her now, I suppose.'

Matthew was thinking of this.

But when was he to speak to Kate? The day on which a young lady had lost a near relative was not usually selected for making a

proposal of marriage to her. But general custom had sometimes to succumb to particular exigencies. If Kate loved him, it could not under any circumstances cause her pain to learn that her affection was returned; and if she really had occasion to entertain doubts about her future means of living, it would not be unsatisfactory to have these doubts resolved.

He took a sheet of paper and wrote to her, repeating these arguments in justification of his prompt action, and saying he would call in the evening for her answer.

‘Give that to Miss Kate, Richard, if you please.’

He was about to put the letter into Richard’s hands, when the thought of Pattie struck him.

He could neither in honour nor in prudence send this letter to Kate until he had undone as far as he could the error into which he had allowed Pattie to fall. It would be cruel to do so on a day of bereavement like this; but he made up his mind that it must be done. Having procrastinated with his usual habit of hesitation for weeks without sufficient reason, he now thought it imperative to rush into action at a moment when it seemed he ought out of kindness to Pattie to pause. Well, he would not force an occasion for opening the subject with her quite so precipitately after all, perhaps—but if the occasion arose of itself during the day, he would not hesitate to make use of it; and in that case his letter to Kate would be ready to be sent immediately afterwards.

‘Are you going back to the “Sheaf,” Richard, or coming to Mr. Chamfer’s?’

‘I haven’t got anything to go to the “Sheaf” for if you haven’t anything to send,’ replied Richard, looking at the letter.

‘Well, come along with me then, and try and be ready to take a letter for me in case I should make up my—in case I should want you to do so.’

---

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ON reaching that temple of architecture which bore Mr. Chamfer’s name on its front door, Matthew was let in by Richard, who had gone down the area steps for that purpose. The first thing that struck him was the dining-room door standing ajar—Pattie’s usual signal that the coast was clear.

Arrived so near to her, he found the idea that he ought not to be too precipitate after the sudden loss which had come upon her, beginning wonderfully to prevail over every other consideration, and that the letter to Kate would have to be delayed for that one day at least. Tapping at the door, he looked in. Pattie was watching for him with a smile.

‘My dear Pattie,’ he said, taking her hands, ‘what a blow this news is! You know how I feel for you.’

'Oh, I am almost heartbroken,' she replied. 'But you are come, and I have some one to cheer me. Now, you must not be in a hurry this morning; you must sit down and talk to me a long, long time.'

'And you are very, very sorry for me?' she asked, sitting down near him.

'Poor, poor, dear grandpa!—it has almost broken my heart. But, I am so glad you are come. They won't let me go and see him, and Kate cannot leave the house, of course; and if it were not for you I should be left here all alone to cry myself to death. But now I am happy again for a little while.'

Glancing at the dimpled white hands, and looking into the beautiful eyes upturned to his, he whispered, 'Poor Pattie!'

'How good you are!' she said.

He flinched at this, and once again his mind turned. It seemed to him imperative to begin his cruel task at once.

To be sitting there with a letter in his pocket declaring his love for one woman, while allowing another to continue in the innocent belief that his love was hers alone, had, he felt, only to be known to be execrated. He called to mind the countenances of men whom he knew to be associated with conduct of the most detestable sort. Could it be possible that he was really like one of them? He knew well what the sense was in thinking of such men: not so much a sense of any abhorrence of them on his own part as a sense of the general abhorrence with which they were regarded by others; but the sensation of thinking of himself as included in that general abhorrence, was something quite new to him. And, yet, was he not already one of them? There were many of them, probably, who had not sought out infamy of deliberate purpose; many of them, probably, had fallen into it only through a weak acquiescence in the leading on of one circumstance to another; and what was he doing? His excuse had been, that precipitancy would be cruel to Pattie, that she must be led with delicacy and tenderness, and that, therefore, opportunity must be waited for. But those others, also, in extenuating their several declensions from good to evil—could they not, also, plead such good intentions?

'Pattie,' he began; and then he stopped, but he strung himself up and went on. 'Pattie, I am afraid I shall have to leave you.'

'So soon, Mat?' she said. 'Are you, then, so busy to-day? and this day above all others. How annoying! uncle and Mr. Stopp seem never to leave you a moment's rest.'

'I mean that I am afraid I shall have to part with you altogether.'

'Mat! Why, what has happened?'

'Nothing has happened; but I think it will be best for us both that I should leave you.'

She had turned very pale.

'Why, Mat? Don't you—don't you love me any longer?'

If Matthew had been a man of duty, he would have recalled to

her mind the details of the morning when Stopp had interrupted them ; he would have pointed out to her that she had misunderstood the direction of what he had said that morning ; he would have opened her eyes to the fact that he had never, either on that occasion or on any other, told her that he loved her ; and, forgetful of one collection of writings upon the subject of duty, in which the greatest theme of all is mercy, he would have left her writhing in humiliation, and uprightly followed the path of his own convenience—in the name of duty.

‘I might become so fond of you, Pattie,’ he said, avoiding her question, ‘that it would be impossible to give you up. It is better, therefore, for both of us, that I should do so now.’

‘But why should we give each other up at all, Mat?’

‘It would be imprudent not to do so.’

‘Why, Mat? Because—is it because—’ she asked, with all her colour coming back, ‘because you are too—not rich enough to—to—’

‘I am certainly not in a position to marry just yet, Pattie,’ he said, coming to her rescue.

‘But you will be some day, Mat ; and I shall have money, you know. Oh, Mat, how cruel of you to talk like this ! You are not serious now, are you? you are saying all this to try me. Well, then, I will tell you : I could not be happy without you.’

Matthew, in his own mind, assured himself that she could. He assured himself that her affections would twine themselves round any one who unceasingly responded to the overflowing tenderness of her own nature ; and he resolved that that one should be Jack. And, in the mean time, Kate must keep his love for herself a secret.

‘No, I am not trifling with you,’ he said. ‘I am quite serious. It is better for us both to part. You would not be happy with me.’

‘Oh, Mat, you will break my heart !’ she said, with a touch of anger mingled with the love in her voice.

‘No, it will beat for a better man than I am. Now, Pattie, summon up all your courage, and think only of the future. Try not to be angry with me ; don’t think me cruel ; think of me only as—yes, as making a sacrifice’ (it was a sacrifice, he said to himself, to cut himself off from an acquaintance like hers)—‘as making a sacrifice for your good. Now, I shall not leave you the burden of acting for yourself ; I shall act for you. Don’t think me heartless. Remember I shall be acting for your own happiness. From this day I shall condemn myself to the pain of not seeing you. You will soon forget me, and at some future day I shall see you happy in the love of an infinitely better man than myself.’

‘Oh, Mat ! how cruel of you !’ she cried, with no anger in her voice now but only undisguised pain. ‘You don’t mean it !—say you don’t mean it ! You need not be afraid to ask me to wait, if that is all you fear.’

And with swimming eyes she put her arms round his neck, just as

she was in the habit of doing with Kate, when the latter was to be induced to do something.

At the same instant the door behind opened, and Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp stood before them.

*The end of Part I.*

---

## PART II.

### CHAPTER I.

PATTIE started up, and hardly conscious of any movement at all, instinctively rushed to the door leading into the passage. Her uncle, however, slammed the door to, and held up his hand, as if in sign that she should remain.

Mr. Chamfer was frowning sullenly; and a nervous twitching at the corners of the mouth added to the ordinary weakness of his countenance.

Matthew retained his seat for a moment, then rose to his feet, and waited, as though giving any one who had anything to say the opportunity of saying it.

Mr. Stopp put his hands into his pockets, and appeared to renew a study of Matthew's boots. He could not, however, resist a desire to lift his eyes to one brief encounter with those of Matthew.

For the first time since he had known him, Matthew saw what Mr. Stopp's eyes were like. They were the more easily seen, in the rare moments when they were seen at all, for the reason that they had no eyelashes to shade them. They were of a dull yellowish hue, devoid of brightness, and showed a soulless sensuality, which corresponded with what was expressed in the form of the swollen lips. A glance at these eyes set the observer's imagination at work picturing some earth animal peering enviously from its humid lair at the outside world of light and warmth.

'A pretty scene for people to get wind of and talk about!' exclaimed Mr. Chamfer, meaning to address himself to his chief clerk, but scowling down with twitching brows at the spot where Pattie was trying to keep her shaking limbs steady. 'One would almost think that we had made a mistake, and, instead of walking into one's own respectable dwelling, had got into some other kind of house, situated—I don't know where.'

Mr. Stopp seemed to endeavour, from a contemplation of Pattie's feet, to ascertain whether or not he and Mr. Chamfer really had got into such an uncertain situation.

'Her grandfather is lying dead only a few streets off,' resumed Mr. Chamfer; 'and here is she—going on like this.'

'The nature of the scene we have just witnessed,' observed Mr.

Stopp, lifting his eyes as far as Pattie's hands, and while framing his sentence with mincing care, listening to it with hardly concealed admiration of what he regarded as a rare mastery of language, 'is, taken in connection with what perhaps may not inaptly be referred to as the melancholy occurrence of the night, hardly, I imagine, to be put forward as an example of the strictly appropriate.'

'You don't, of course, require me to tell you, after what I have just witnessed,' said Mr. Chamfer, turning his face, but not his eyes, towards Pattie, 'that you cannot remain here any longer.'

Pattie properly thought it would be undutiful to express to her uncle-by-marriage the delight she felt at the near prospect of quitting his house.

'I had, however, better not leave it to your own sense of propriety,' resumed Mr. Chamfer; 'I had better settle all possible doubt upon the subject, by giving you a positive direction to leave my house, if not to-day, at least without any unnecessary delay. I don't see,' he continued, turning to Mr. Stopp, in invitation of that gentleman's support, 'what other course is open to me.'

Having regard to all the circumstances of the case, slowly began the chief clerk, bending himself once more to the painful but pleasing labour of piecing out a sentence from the well-worn stock of his cherished phraseology; 'in fact, duly considering the question from its several points of view—er—in fine, viewing it from all sides with due deliberation, it seems to me—in short, it forces itself upon one's conviction—er—that, in point of fact, your interests—one might, perhaps, not improperly say your *vital* interests—imperatively require that you should take the course you propose, and no other; in a word, not to speak too figuratively, they leave no other avenue of action open to you.'

'I am ready to go now; I wish to go now,' murmured Pattie.

'Where?' inquired Mr. Chamfer, with the eager impatience of one who had a rejoinder for the expected answer.

'To grandpapa's—to the "Sheaf."'

'By what right?' asked her uncle, with the same eagerness.

'It was my home before I came here,' said Pattie, almost in a whisper.

'Well, it is your home no longer,' rejoined Mr. Chamfer. 'It will perhaps startle you, and perhaps this person also,' he added, looking askance at Matthew, 'to learn that your grandfather has left you without a penny.'

It did startle both Pattie and Matthew. The countenance of the former betrayed the shock; the latter's remained unmoved.

'Your grandfather,' resumed Mr. Chamfer, 'presuming on the fact that I have lately been giving you a home here, took it for granted that I should undertake the responsibility of providing for your future. This,' continued Mr. Chamfer, again turning to his chief clerk for support, 'was surely unwarrantable on his part.'

'Your generosity in the past,' observed Mr. Stopp, 'can hardly

be regarded as justifying,—must in fact be considered as not justifying an assumption of its continuance in the future.'

'Probably but for the scene of which I have just been a horrified witness,' resumed Mr. Chamfer, 'I might have, in appearance, so far confirmed your grandfather's views, as to continue to afford you a home here for a time; but Mr. Stopp's vigilance has been sufficient to put me on my guard.'

Mr. Stopp, with his hands still in his side-pockets, bent his head forward to an inspection of his own boots, as if in intimation that though he would beg to be excused from formally accepting this tribute in so many words, he was bound tacitly, at least, to recognise its justice.

'And now,' continued Mr. Chamfer, in address to Pattie, 'if you have anything to say in explanation of this outrageous scene, you have still the opportunity of doing so. Have you anything to say?'

In a scarcely audible whisper, but without a moment's hesitation, Pattie said,—

'No.'

'Then go to your own room at once, and I will write to your Aunt Parlyb to prepare to receive you immediately after the funeral.'

With one lingering glance at Matthew, who gave a rude shock to Mr. Stopp's sense of what was due to the presence of himself and Mr. Chamfer, by going forward to open the door for her, and thus causing both the architect and his chief clerk to move aside, she left the room.

'And you,' resumed Mr. Chamfer, turning his head in its stiff enclosure of shirt-collar to a scarcely perceptible degree in the direction of Matthew—'have you anything to say?'

This was what Matthew had been rapidly considering. Had he anything to say? As he had before determined, he intended, if Kate accepted his offer, to ask her to keep their engagement a secret until they both knew, as he felt certain they both would know at no very distant date, that Pattie, during his self-imposed separation from her, and in the presence of his friend Jack or of some one else, had forgotten her present predilection for himself. Chamfer and Stopp would interpret his self-isolation from Pattie according to their own fashion,—to his disparagement, of course. Let them. He should say nothing in that case, as he should say nothing now. So, in reply to Mr. Chamfer's question, he said as Pattie had said,—

'No.'

'All I have to say to you, then,' observed Mr. Chamfer, 'is that you will leave my house at once,—only stopping,' hastily added the cautious architect, 'to finish any drawing you may have begun. I will see what it is I owe you, and send you a cheque for the amount by Mr. Chipples.'

Matthew turned to go. Mr. Stopp thought the pleasure of what he regarded as his own masterly triumph had not been sufficiently



prolonged. Besides, here was an opportunity for a little flattery of his employer, whom he hated because he was his employer, but whom he flattered because he hoped some day to change him from an employer into a partner. Commencing a study of his own knees, he said,—

‘I feel it my duty, Mr. Bernock, as the appointed chief of this office—next, of course, to its principal—to call your attention to the fact that you have not yet offered an apology to Mr. Chamfer for this morning’s occurrence. Without giving you such a reminder, I should feel that I was not fulfilling the requirements of my position.’

‘Well, having discharged your duty,’ said Matthew, ‘your mind will no doubt now be at rest.’

‘It is, of course, a most painful thing to me,’ resumed the chief clerk, ‘to be a witness to your disgrace, and still more painful to me to have been the unwilling instrument in bringing it about.’

‘That,’ said Matthew, ‘is your crooked way of saying that you mean to regard my ceasing my service here as a disgrace, and that you are delighted by the reflection that you are the instrument of it.’

‘Yes,’ rejoined Mr. Stopp, now turning his attention to Matthew’s sleeve-links, ‘you have always persisted in regarding me as your enemy. Your belief in that matter is palpably absurd, because the profound sense I labour under of the heavy obligations attaching to my position in this establishment, has never been concealed; and one of those obligations I consider to be the protection and the advancement of my subordinates. It would be curious, therefore, to learn what could have been the fancied grounds of your supposition—I may say your absurd supposition—that I was ever, that I could ever condescend to be your enemy.’

‘To trace the origin and progress of your animosity towards me,’ observed Matthew, either unconsciously falling into the chief clerk’s priggish style, or yielding to a momentary desire of parodying it, ‘would be as painful and disgusting as it would be uninteresting and useless.’

‘What ridiculous nonsense!’ exclaimed Mr. Chamfer. ‘As though a chief could possibly entertain any feeling of animosity towards a subordinate. You have probably—most probably, in fact—given rise in Mr. Stopp’s mind to dissatisfaction and condemnation, but never to animosity, I am sure; don’t flatter yourself with such a supposition.’

‘You have yourself, Mr. Chamfer, been an aider and abettor in the manifestation of the animosity I have referred to,’ said Matthew; ‘and therefore you cannot be unaware of its existence. But why pursue a subject so uninteresting?’

‘This impudence is intolerable!’ exclaimed Mr. Chamfer to Mr. Stopp; and turning away with twitching mouth and eyebrows, he added, ‘Get rid of him if you can.’

‘I might have been your friend,’ said Mr. Stopp to Matthew, but not seeking the latter’s eye this time, ‘had you acted differently; but you have adopted a line of conduct which, instead of leading

to my approbation, has ended, you see, in this, your ineffaceable humiliation; in bringing about which, as I have said, I regret to have been compelled to become the unwilling instrument.'

'As for your ever having been likely to be my friend,' rejoined Matthew with a smile, 'you know as well as I do, that you would never be the friend—never affect to be the friend, I mean—of any one in a position subordinate, or otherwise inferior, to your own, without intending to make him the poor aid to some poor end aimed at for your own advantage.' Mr. George Stopp glanced round sideways, apparently at a lower button of Matthew's coat, but in obvious anger. 'No man placed under you in authority,' continued Matthew, 'will ever receive your help unless he be inferior to you and at the same time useful to your personal ends. Any degree of merit, if it seems likely to surpass or rival your own, is in your mind a thing to be hated; a thing which, if it cannot be wholly suppressed, is at any rate to be obscured. But,' he added, 'I am not going to gratify your palpable desire to prolong this wrangle; and so, I wish you both good morning.'

With which salutation Matthew left the room.

'Stopp,' said Mr. Chamfer, 'there is such a deadly calmness about that fellow's voice and manner that I am sure he is meditating mischief. Keep near me, or the scoundrel may stab you.'

The timid Mr. Chamfer feared that Matthew might do something to *him*; but he thought this way of putting it showed a generous solicitude for the safety of another.

Matthew sent off his letter to Kate by the hands of Richard immediately.

---

## CHAPTER II.

MATTHEW was one of those who, too much given to reflection and deliberation, seem to be ever delaying the moment of action; who, having punishment to inflict, hesitate in the hope that pardon may be justifiable; who, seeing before them a positive advantage, venture not to seize it until every doubt about every other seeming advantage has been resolved; who having, in short, two courses before them, postpone taking either in the fear that the balance between the respective merits of the two may not yet have been struck with sufficient accuracy; but who, all doubts being once determined, are more precipitant than the nature which is swift simply because it is thoughtless.

It had seemed necessary to subject Pattie to a sharp pain; he had long meditated the advisability of making a proposal to Kate; and he decided to carry both things into instant execution only on the day when death was in the family.

The real cause of this precipitancy was to be found in the uncertain position in which he supposed Kate to be suddenly

placed, and in Richard's report as to the deep interest affected to be felt in her welfare by the man with the smile.

He went that evening to the 'Golden Sheaf,' conscious of being about to force the situation, and uncertain as to what reception he would meet with, but prepared for either issue.

Putting on a stoical front that morning, before Chamfer and Stopp, he yet knew that he had suffered. Moderate drinking of alcohol might or might not in some cases be right; but this much was certain: that if he had never drunk alcohol at all his intercourse with Pattie would have been more reserved, and she, consequently, would have been saved from that unfortunate mistake as to the extent of his friendship with her.

He had therefore once again made the old familiar resolution: thenceforth to do without intoxicating drinks entirely; and he had so far adhered to his new endeavour that he had taken nothing of that nature this afternoon, though, as the result of what he had drunk in the morning, strongly drawn to do so. He wished that nothing said or done in the coming interview with Kate should be due to the weakness induced by the force of drink.

He found Richard standing, hands in pockets, near the steps of the chief doorway as if in waiting.

'T'other Cove and the Temp'rance Chap are inside,' observed Richard.

'Mr. Stopp and Mr. Peevers?'

Richard nodded his head in acquiescence.

Matthew began to regret having relied entirely on his own strength, to the exclusion of alcohol; but without pause, he opened the door and walked in.

Mr. Peevers was seated before a plate and a teacup; and his attention to each was so rapid and so impartial that it was difficult to say at any moment in which act he was engaged—whether in eating or in drinking.

Mr. Stopp was contemplating his own boots with his back to the fire; while now and then applying to his swollen lips a thick cigar, which he smoked at with short, repellant puffs, as if he regarded it as somebody whom it was necessary to keep at a distance.

'John,' Mr. Peevers was observing to a waiter, 'my appetite is one o' them delicate ones which grow with coxin'; and I have to go very gentle for fear of chokin';—but, I say, John, keep that door shut, and don't let folks come stalking in here as if they were already married into the family.'

'I must say, Mr. Bernock, in view of, that is,' observed Mr. Stopp, preparing for the throes of another model sentence, 'considering, in fact, having regard to—'

'There are some folks,' interposed Mr. Peevers, while gulping down his tea and his beef, 'who don't have no regard to anything. Any one would think that some folks thought that people saved up, and put by, money just for penniless intruders to come in and

appropriate, instead of meaning to keep it, as some folks ought to know that people who have saved up, and put by, money, always ought to mean to keep it—where? why, in the family or in the family connection. When a hint is given it ought to be took.’

‘I must say, Mr. Bernock,’ resumed Mr. Stopp, craning over to get a nearer view of Mr. Peevers’ boots this time, ‘that, taking into account, in fine, that looking back—’

‘Some folks,’ again interposed Mr. Peevers in continuation of his generalities, ‘never look back: they’re all lookin’ forward to what they can get.’

‘I must say—’ Mr. Stopp was beginning.

‘Now,’ interrupted Mr. Peevers, not looking at any one present, but speaking as if it was for the benefit, say, of any interloper who might have chanced to step in at that particular moment, ‘I always thought it was an understood thing to everybody—that is, to everybody except outsiders looking about to put other people’s money into their own pockets—that the old man and me always meant the Young Un for my son Jim, if Jim liked to have her. Now, if any outsider,’ added Mr. Peevers, continuing generously to fling his pearls of speech about for any one in the wide, wide world who was lucky enough to catch them, ‘if any outsider wants any more information on that point, he can get it from me as the old man’s executor; and I call upon my co-executor, Mr. George Stopp, here—which the name of the lawyer not being known, and viewing the emergency, the will was found in a drawer, and opened before the funeral, not knowing for certain who were to act, therefore I call on him to corroborate my statement, that the Young Un was always meant for my Jim, if my Jim liked to have her.’

‘That is a matter which will require careful consideration,’ said Mr. Stopp, somewhat quickly for him.

Mr. Peevers looked round suddenly at Mr. Stopp, as if that gentleman had just pulled his hair.

‘I was about to observe, Mr. Bernock,’ resumed Mr. Stopp, ‘that, having regard to what occurred this morning at Mr. Chamfer’s residence, in connection with that gentleman’s niece, that your presence in this house—the house of so near a relative of hers and of her uncle’s—is scarcely—er—proper; I might say with truth, scarcely seemly; and I ought perhaps to add that my deliberate opinion is that it is absolutely *unseemly*.’

Matthew naturally surmised that Mr. Stopp had lost no time in acquainting Kate with the particulars of the interrupted conversation in the morning; but he also felt confident of Kate’s receiving his own truthful explanation of the affair, and of his own influence over her.

Seeing Richard hovering near the door, Matthew said,—

‘Richard, is Miss Kate on this side of the house?’

Richard nodded in the affirmative.

‘Here, I say,’ cried Mr. Peevers, turning in appeal to Mr. Stopp,

'are me and you, the executors under the will, going to stand having questions like that passed over our heads and addressed to loafing boys, as if we wasn't nobody whatever?'

'Richard,' observed Mr. Stopp, looking as high above Richard's head as he could, 'you had better return to the legitimate scene of your present avocation: I say *present*, because to-morrow I shall take Mr. Chamfer's opinion on the question—doubtless, to you, the interesting question—whether he remunerates you with a liberal weekly salary in no other view than that of encouraging you to dissipate your time away from the precincts of his household; which I imagine may be, for the present at least, not improperly referred to as the *legitimate* sphere of your engagements.'

Richard paused to reflect on the meaning of this full-sized remark, and then said to Matthew,—

'Does that mean I'm going to be turned out of my place to-morrow?'

'If you are, come to me, and I will find you another place,' replied Matthew, with a grand air of protection.

Going towards a room, with which he was now familiar, he tapped at the door, and was requested by Kate to enter.

'Mr. Bernock!' she exclaimed.

Her exclamation had in it a tone of astonished indignation, and she rose hastily. One might have thought that she was very much taken by surprise; and yet she had known that Matthew had been in the house some minutes already, and she had known that it was his tap at the door. She knew the meeting would be a painful one, and she had had ample time to avoid it if she pleased.

'You received my letter?' he asked.

'I did, but I scarcely thought your sense of what is right and wrong would allow you to carry out your expressed intention of coming here for an answer.'

'Mr. Stopp has, then, told his story, and with some effect, I see.'

'Can you deny the truth of his statement?'

'Even if he limited himself on this occasion to the truth, there would be quite enough in his statement to call for explanation on my part.'

'Explanation!' she exclaimed.

'Yes, explanation. Will you hear it?'

'Mr. Bernock,' she said, 'I have no one to speak for me; I will therefore speak for myself. Your conduct this morning was justifiable only on one supposition; that you meant to make my cousin—' Here she broke off with a gesture of impatience, continuing after a few moments,—'You learn five minutes after the interruption of your—interview—that her grandfather, instead of leaving his property to her, has left it to me—'

'Does Mr. Stopp dare to say that he or any one else told me that?' asked Matthew.

'You immediately sit down,' she continued, without replying to

his question, 'and write me this letter, making me an offer of marriage—but why should I go on? Take back your letter, and never venture to speak to me, nor attempt to see me again.'

'You are content then,' he said, as calmly as she, 'to let your inference, that I wrote this letter with the knowledge of your grandfather having left his property to you and not to your cousin, remain undisturbed as a settled conviction? You refuse also to listen to any explanation I might be prepared to offer as to my interview, as you call it, with your cousin this morning?'

Turned away from him, she shook her head. He saw regret in her face, and if he had seen no more than that he would have persisted. But he also saw in her expression absolute incredulity with regard to anything he had to say—unshakable disbelief in the honesty of his word.

'Very well, then,' he continued, 'I will confine myself to one observation; if the time ever come when I am happily able to prove, entirely apart from my own assertion, that you are mistaken both in your view of my relations with your cousin, and in your belief that I knew of this unexpected disposition of your grandfather's property on the writing of this letter, I will then ask the favour of one short interview with you; but that is the only favour I will ever seek or accept at your hands.'

'The only request I have to make of you,' she said, 'is this, that you will maintain the same silence on the contents of that letter as I have done, and intend to do.'

He bowed, and as he turned to go, he found his mind contemplating the extremely dishonourable nature of the charges that could be made against him: that he had played with the affections of Pattie; that he had betrayed his friend Jack; that he had insulted Kate; and that he had been influenced in making her an offer of marriage, only by the hope of benefiting by her unexpected inheritance.

He thought, also, how easily a suggestion of intemperance could be laid against him, and on how considerable a basis of truth! He reflected that this was the second time he had enabled Stopp to triumph over him. He thought of all this, recognised drink as the cause of all his inconsiderateness and precipitancy, and marvelled at his own conduct of the affairs of life as much as if he had been some one else, and not himself, with this difference only: that while such conduct in another person would have excited his sympathy, viewed as his own it inclined him to smile with derision.

Mr. Stopp and Mr. Peevers took no pains to make a secret of their satisfaction with the brevity of Kate's interview with Matthew. That gentleman passed by them with a face which seemed untroubled. Notwithstanding, his heart was both troubled and sinking; and if he had known how troubled and sinking was Kate's heart also after his departure, he would have taken more pains to prevail on her to listen to an explanation.

In the act of going out under the archway he observed Richard still lingering there.

'Have you decided, then, on quitting Mr. Chamfer's service already, Richard?'

'No; but My Bloke' (Richard meant his father) 'is hangin' round here on purpose to have a row with the Old Woman' (that was Richard's mother), 'because she won't let him have any of her money for more drink.'

Matthew knew that Mrs. Spike was working at the 'Golden Sheaf,' and he knew that it was through his recommendation that she had found employment there.

'Then you are stopping,' he said, 'to give an eye to what may take place?'

'My Bloke, after a certain point,' replied Richard, 'wants a good deal of watching.'

'You should avoid, as far as possible, Richard, giving your enemies a handle for accusation against you; therefore go back and attend to your work at Mr. Chamfer's. I will give an eye to your father.'

As Richard, much relieved, went away, Matthew meditated as follows:—

'I suppose my worst enemies would find it difficult, in the case of a woman of Mrs. Spike's usual personal appearance, to attribute my undertaking her defence to an improper motive; and yet, no doubt, many self-called men of duty would be prepared to show in their long-drawn-out phraseology that it is an undue interference between man and wife on my part.'

For he had heard Mr. Stopp, and like self-styled men of duty, stigmatise the most judicious act of charity as an encouragement to indolence and its consequence, vice, in the sole ultimate end of justifying their own parsimonious obedience to the calls of charity. He had also heard Mr. Stopp and such as he denounce a physical attack on a ruffian caught in the act of jumping on his wife's ribs as an invasion of the sacred relations existing between the ruffian and his wife, in the sole ultimate end of justifying their own prudent avoidance of anything tending to exasperate the ruffian to an attack on themselves.

---

### CHAPTER III.

REFLECTING on this, and having ascertained as far as possible that Spike was not on the premises, and that the carpenter's wife was closely occupied within, he entered the adjacent billiard-room, where he was not surprised to find one of Mr. Jack Gurgoyne's very numerous circle of friends. In the midst of a game of billiards with this gentleman, he was suddenly and unpleasantly awakened to the duty he had undertaken on Richard's behalf by the sounds

of scuffling and screaming in the passage opening on to the neatly-sanded archway.

Hurrying out, he saw how far he had neglected to exercise due watchfulness in his task. Mr. Spike, first introduced into this narrative as a man in a flannel jacket, was running back from the prostrate body of his wife, and seemed to be preparing to continue her prostration with the aid of his foot.

Now, a man of duty like Mr. Stopp would no doubt have remembered that Mrs. Spike had a remedy provided by the laws of her country; and, declaring that if she had shrunk from the exposure of taking her wrongs into a police court, or yielded to any weak feeling of forgiveness towards her husband, as wives have been known to do, it was her own fault if she was subjected to the same ill-treatment again; would prudently have avoided connection with the affair. Matthew, however, chose to infringe on the relationship of the assailant and his wife, and without any hesitation whatever, walked up in front of Spike, and with a vigorous blow in the chest, sent him staggering backwards.

Having seen Mrs. Spike immediately dragged into safety by some one issuing from an adjacent room, he went back to the billiard-room. Not unexpectedly Mr. Spike followed, and requested to be informed why he had been nearly knocked down. Matthew with precision explained that if he had run for a policeman, Mrs. Spike might have been found on his return out of the reach of the law's protection—in point of fact, dead, whether she liked it or not; whereas, by instantly diverting her husband's attention, he, Matthew, had given her a chance of escaping death on the spot. Mr. Spike expressed himself as altogether dissatisfied with this explanation, and flinging his cap and flannel jacket into a corner, declared that he would be content with nothing short of fighting Matthew.

The latter, regarding Spike as physically a much stronger and more enduring man than himself, made up his mind to sustain a defeat; but having not only learnt the art of knocking a man down, but also the much more difficult art of taking the consequences, he prepared to make his defeat as costly to his adversary as possible.

He had scarcely removed a portion of his clothing, when he found himself attacked. Not having lived with temperance of late, he knew that in that respect he was no more fitted than his antagonist for a prolonged struggle; and, in addition to finding his opponent a stronger and harder man, he quickly discovered him to be as dexterous in the use of his natural weapons of defence and attack as he was himself. Nevertheless, on account of his own greater activity, he had very much the best of it in the earlier stages of the contest. He succeeded in knocking Mr. Spike off his feet no less than twice, and imprinted on that person's countenance several ugly marks. He was able to keep his own face free from injury, with the exception of a very palpable cut over the right temple;



but for many a day his body recalled to him in a multitude of discolorations and abrasions how extremely rude the shock of Mr. Spike's fists might be made; and as the struggle continued, the irregularity of his life began to tell more and more in lessening his ability to contend with his opponent's superior strength and powers of enduring fatigue.

When at length he himself came into almost stunning concussion with the floor in consequence of a direct and powerful blow from Mr. Spike, he was unpleasantly sensible that the moment when his defeat would be apparent was imminent. A copious draught of brandy enabled him for a short time to add to the impressions he had made on his adversary's face; but eventually he paid the penalty of having recourse to such an aid in a rapid increase of weakness and a consequent loss in steadiness of attack.

He was wondering how many moments at the utmost he could possibly resist the overwhelming sense of fatigue which now made his knees shake beneath him; when to his astonishment Mr. Spike, instead of coming forward in response to the signal for recommencing, stepped into a corner and put on his cap and flannel jacket again.

'I've had enough,' observed Mr. Spike, applying a handkerchief to his face; 'if any gent here would like to take my place, he can; and I'll hold his coat and hat.'

Intemperance had made greater inroads on Mr. Spike's powers of enduring pain and fatigue than Matthew had supposed: that was all.

At this moment the door opened, and Mr. Stopp made his appearance with a policeman.

'Constable,' he said, pointing to Matthew, who was still standing coatless and bareheaded, and with the cut over his right temple only partially stanchd, 'take that person into custody for drunken and disorderly conduct.'

The policeman was approaching Matthew, when Kate came hastily on the scene.

'Who sent for you, constable?' she inquired.

'I did,' replied Mr. Stopp, 'for the purpose of giving that person,' pointing to Matthew, 'into custody for drunken and disorderly conduct.'

'When it is necessary to call in the aid of the police for the maintenance of order in this house,' said Kate, 'I will send for their aid myself. Constable, go into the waiters' room, where there is business of another sort awaiting you.'

As this business was correctly surmised by the policeman to be nothing else than a matter entirely personal to himself, he acted with alacrity on the new order he had received.

'But,' exclaimed Mr. Stopp, 'I am an executor under the will, and I insist on the constable being recalled to do his duty; and I am quite sure that if my co-executor, Mr. Peevers, had not left

the house I should have found him a strong coadjutor in this course.'

'I also am an executor under the will,' observed Kate, 'and I insist on the matter going no further.'

This observation evoked from all parts of the room a half smothered sound meant for applause; and Mr. Stopp, thinking that if he desired to gain an effective influence over Kate, it was injudicious to begin by opposing her, swallowed his displeasure and retired.

Mr. Spike had been perturbed during this discussion in trying to decide which would be the more profitable side to take. The winning side being now ascertained, he signified his accession to it in these words,—

'There's a nice sort of a bloke for a house of mournin'!—to go a-calling in the bobbies, with the poor old man a-layin' dead upstairs!'

And Mr. Spike, thinking that Kate owed him some return for his allegiance to her side, continued,—

'Now, miss, won't you pass the word for 'em to draw me a pint o' beer, after all I've gone through? The old man's death has reg'lar cut me up. Why, miss, I have been cryin' so I haven't got no strength left; and I wouldn't mind if you made the pint a quart, miss.'

'Go home at once, Spike,' she replied.

And she left the room without a word or a look in Matthew's direction.

Mr. Spike left also, declaring that he wouldn't give way to sorrow for the old man any more, if that was all that was to be got for a display of tender feelings; and that he could do better by letting himself out to an undertaker.

---

#### CHAPTER IV.

MATTHEW himself went away soon after, smiling bitterly as his thoughts, somewhat clouded by sundry glasses of grog taken after his unexpected encounter with Spike, turned on the unfortunate position in which he now found himself with regard to the three persons in the world whom he most loved—Pattie, Kate, and Jack. With regard to the first named, he thought he knew enough of Kate to feel sure that she had too proud a sense of dignity to give any hint of what had passed between him and herself to Pattie. It was not necessary therefore, he thought, to enter into any explanation on that point with the latter; but he determined that it would be better that their interview that morning should be, as he had intended it to be, the last one for many a day to come; and he resolved that on the morrow he would say a gentle good-bye to her

by letter, reminding her of what he had already said as to the necessity which existed for their ceasing to see each other.

Meditating thus, he came upon Mr. Spike leaning against a corner-post. The contemplative air of that person's features gave signs of how deeply he was pondering the question, whether or not there was any possible means, hitherto overlooked, of finding that night, previous to the closing of the public-houses, sufficient coppers to purchase a quart of porter; or, failing that, a pint, or, if the worst came to the worst, even so small a draught as half-a-pint. His glance fell on Matthew, and glowed with the light of hope.

'Look here, I say, guv'nor,' he said, 'you ain't goin' to bear malice for what took place to-night, are you, guv'nor? I know it wasn't for the like o' me to strike a gen'l'man, but—'

'You only tried to do the best you could for yourself, Spike, in a fair fight,' replied Matthew; and he thought to himself that Mr. Spike might have done more for himself if he had known how very far he, Matthew, had been from being able to do better.

'Well then, guv'nor, you ain't goin' to bear no malice?'

'If you will only let what took place to-night act as a hint, that you must in future behave better to your wife, whom I know to be a good, honest, industrious woman, then I shall have no ill-feeling towards you at all, Spike.'

'That's all right, guv'nor; I promise not to do it no more, and you see if I don't keep my word,' said Mr. Spike, glad to have got over preliminaries, and to be able now to proceed to the real point in view. 'Now, guv'nor, I'm a-goin' to avert to another topic. Guv'nor, I've always said, and I always will say, as when a gen'l'man gives his word, he always keeps it.'

'Well, Spike, now come to the point.'

'There, sir, I know you'd see I was a-drivin' at somethin'; because you—why, *you* can see through a fourteen-inch wall, when anybody else can't even so much as see what's in front of it. Now, sir, don't you remember one night when you took me 'ome, sir?—one night in at the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' sir, when them ill-behaved young men behind the bar was insultin' of me like anythink, sir, and you was afraid I was goin' to punch all their 'eds, which they deserved it; and you says, "Spike," says you, "*if* you'll come out o' this 'ouse"—and I *did* come out, sir—"Spike," says you, "*if* you'll come out o' this 'ere 'ouse"—and I did come out, don't you remember, sir?—says you, "Spike," you says, like a gen'l'man, "I'll give you a pint o' beer, Spike," you says.'

'I remember, Spike.'

'Well, sir—'

'Yes, I know; from circumstances over which you had at the moment no control, you were not able to take advantage of the offer.'

Matthew was at this moment approaching the neighbourhood of

the new lodging he had taken, and was consequently not far from the philanthropic establishment of the 'Pilgrims' Rest.'

'If you will promise to keep sober, and go home afterwards, Spike,' he said, 'I will keep my promise, and in the same place where I made it.'

'Thank you, sir,' returned Spike. 'I shall be very glad of that pint o' beer, sir, and I shall be very proud for Mrs. *Rawlins* to see me a-drinkin' it in the company of a gen'l'm'n. All right, Mrs. *Rawlins* !'

He continued for some time in this way, partly to Matthew, and partly as if to a vision of Mrs. Rawlins, upon whom the menacing irony of his tone seemed to be foreshadowing retribution for something.

'That's the handsome manageress, isn't it?' observed Matthew, calling to mind Lenny's artistic admiration of her face, and the surprise and interest she had excited in the mind of Jack Gurgyle.

'I'll give her *handsome* !' exclaimed Spike. 'All right, Mrs. *Rawlins* ! I know a thing or two about *you*, Mrs. *Rawlins* !'

Remembering the interview he had witnessed between her and Spike's wife, Matthew thought it probable that Spike did know something more about her than she wished to be known, and he turned to look at his companion a little enquiringly.

'Oh no, sir,' said Spike, with an air of one who was much too clever to be seen through even by Matthew ; 'you're a gen'l'm'n, you are, and you're goin' to stand me a pint; but a secret ain't worth much when there's too many in it.'

'But you are not going to black-mail this Mrs. Rawlins on account of some knowledge you possess about something that concerns her, are you, Spike?'

'I never said I was goin' to black-mail nobody, sir,' returned Mr. Spike; 'but I ain't goin' to be insulted by her young men, and have the cold shoulder turned on me, without payin' her back, sir. Oh no, Mrs. *Rawlins* ! And if these bad times is goin' to keep on, and if a little drop o' beer is always goin' to be so 'ard to come by—why, I ain't goin' to keep dark for nothin'. No; you see if I do, Mrs. *Rawlins* !'

The ignoble detail of going to a public-house, and giving a pint of beer to a bibulous carpenter who had no need of it, was one which Matthew felt he had reason to be ashamed of; but if he had known with what events in the future this visit to the 'Pilgrims' Rest' was to connect his past life, he would have been startled.

Ignorant as he was of what was to come, he was startled even now to observe *again* at the door of the public-house two persons whose presence there, and in each other's company, seemed so curious to him. One was that advocate of total abstinence, Mr. Peevers; the other, a person who never entered his thoughts under

any less vague designation than *the man with the smile*. They both passed round the corner without having seen Matthew.

'Now, look at them two coves!' exclaimed Mr. Spike. 'That teetotal chap as never treats a poor man to a pint o' beer, for fear of encouragin' intemp'rance, and yet is always ready to eat himself ill if somebody else 'll pay for the spread; and that cove what's always smilin' to himself as if he know'd as he know'd somethin' very dark as nobody else know'd, and was very pleased to know what he know'd. I wonder what brings *them* down here, and how they come to know each other?'

This was what Matthew was wondering also.

'Who *is* that man, Spike?' he asked. 'The one with the smile, I mean.'

'I don't know exactly, sir. I've heard his name, but I forget it. He puts up at the 'Sheaf' a good deal, and they say he's very rich—keeps his hosses and his carriages, and has a handsome place in the country. Folks think he's after the Young Un; but whoever he is, and whatever he's after,' continued Mr. Spike, with a gape of indifference, 'I don't suppose he means the Young Un much good. He don't look like one as would.'

'Far from it,' thought Matthew, and he smiled more bitterly than before, and the reflection of how completely he had deprived himself of all power of shielding the woman he loved seemed to burn in his brain and to numb his heart.

Entering one of the sheltered box-like compartments of the establishment with his companion, he saw the well-featured manageress in close conversation with Mr. Chipples. The latter, on seeing Matthew, bowed with his usual air of diffidence and half-concealed fear, and shrank entirely behind the screen which, until that moment, had only partially covered him from observation. The manageress fixed her unflinching, steady gaze on Matthew, and seemed for a few moments to be cogitating whether or not she should give any sign of having seen him before. Matthew having lifted his hat, she replied to his salutation with a slight bend of the head, but with the same steady gaze. Then her glance lighted on Spike, from whom she instantly turned with as much disdain marked in her face as the imperturbable set of her features seemed capable of showing.

'All right, Mrs. Rawlins!' muttered Mr. Spike, half to himself and half to Matthew.

While Spike was drinking his beer, which he lingered over with a mournful sense that it might be his last draught that night, Matthew was listlessly carrying back his mind, lulled into quiet now by what he was drinking, to the night when he had accompanied Mrs. Rawlins after her unexpected interview with Mrs. Spike. He remembered her anxiety to ascertain the extent of his knowledge of the country, and the locality of that part of it with which he was best acquainted, and he wondered what was the

nature of the knowledge upon which her curiosity concerning him was based. And again he asked himself if *she* also knew anything relating to that *shame* which his dead father had spoken of, and to which the trembling Mr. Chipples had referred. Then he reasoned with himself upon the absurdity of connecting with that subject a person whom he now saw for the third time in his life, simply because she had manifested some curiosity concerning him, and because she was acquainted with Mr. Chipples.

With another pint of beer he bribed Spike to go home, and as that person took his departure, Matthew reflected that it was getting late for himself also. He lingered in deciding whether he should go and finish his cigar with a friend whom he was sure to find at home, or whether he should go straight home to bed; and in the few moments occupied in that decision, it might be said that if he himself had any power in shaping the course of his life, the future before him was wavering in uncertainty. He looked up, and met the gaze of Mrs. Rawlins, bent tranquilly but steadfastly on him. This gaze was so full of thought, as well as steadfastness, that Matthew became as conscious, it seemed to him, that there was a hidden knowledge of something concerning him behind that look as if she had told him so.

The point of uncertainty, if uncertainty there were, had been turned. His own curiosity and attention were excited. He had lingered to decide a trivial question, and his lingering had kept him from leaving a path which was to lead to events of a magnitude strangely disproportionate to this small link which connected them with his past.

Soon after, he heard Mr. Chipples move from the corner where he had appeared to be lurking rather than resting, and from a nod of salutation on the part of Mrs. Rawlins, Matthew inferred that the old man had taken his leave. The manageress now approached the compartment where Matthew was standing, and of which, since Spike's departure, he had been the only occupant.

'The weather is very unpleasant,' she said.

The remark was so commonplace, that Matthew felt sure a person of Mrs. Rawlins's apparent taciturnity would not have taken the trouble to move out of her place to make it, without intending it as the prelude to something more important. So he simply replied,—

'Yes.'

'Winter is always unpleasant in London,' she continued.

'Very often, if not always.'

'The country is never unpleasant at any season,' she added.

'The *country* again! that was the subject of her questions before,' thought Matthew. Then he said aloud,—

'That depends a good deal on what country it is, doesn't it?'

'I mean the country in England—at least, I was thinking more especially of that when I spoke.'

'Ah!'

'Do you like the country?' she asked.

'Yes, generally.'

'Which part do you know best?'

'Madam,' thought Matthew, 'it is for you to tell me which part of the country you wish to examine me on.' Then to her he replied,—

'I know many parts pretty well.'

'Do you know the west at all?'

'Oh yes.'

'What places in that part are you best acquainted with?'

'I know so many places in the west equally well, that I can hardly reply to your question,' he said.

'Now, madam,' thought he, calling to mind the name of the place which Jack Gurgyle had mentioned in talking of her extraordinary likeness to a picture or sketch he had, 'you are going to ask me if I know Broodley Waters, near the Severn.'

She did not, however; but when, a few moments after, she moved away, he thought her steady features showed a slight shade of disappointment.

Their conversation had not been more important than that; but his curiosity and attention had become excited, *and the point of uncertainty as to his future, if uncertainty there were, had been turned.*

When he left the house to go home, later than he had intended it to be, he was aware, though his gait and mien were steady as usual, that his brain was under the influence of much more alcohol than he ought to have taken; but he was not aware that for a few minutes he was the subject of curious observation on the part of Mr. Raymond Filps, auctioneer and house agent. That gentleman had for the moment so far ceased from the excitement of making money that he found time, while contemplating Matthew, to soliloquise as follows:—

'To think a chap like that should be able in that affair of the lease to make me come down with forty pounds, and to have done it as smart as if he had been bred up to business all his life! Never mind, Mr. Double-edge; it will be my turn next!'

---

## CHAPTER V.

A FEW minutes after waking the next morning, he found his mind dragging wearily over the unpleasant particulars of his present situation. With his brain numbed and his nerves shaken by the alcohol which he had stimulated himself with over night, these particulars did not present themselves to his mind in tints of the rising sun.

From his apparent deception of Pattie, to his apparent betrayal

of his friend Jack, to the apparently mercenary motive of his proposal to Kate, and on to the success of Mr. Stopp's intrigues against him, his thoughts moved in weary progress; and then back over all again, only to return to and fro, travelling round and round, and brooding over each with the helpless persistency and dreary monotony of thoughts working in a brain prostrated by the after-effects of excessive indulgence in alcohol.

Quickened slowly but inevitably by this exercise, his mental faculties, after a time, instead of labouring with sluggishness, began to glide on with a rapidity which ended in restless excitement. His mind was no longer numbered; it burnt with an energy which lit up the path of his thoughts with painful luminosity.

By this fierce light he saw how clearly the unfortunate climax of his intercourse with Pattie—the obvious cause of those other disasters which his mind was brooding over—was to be attributed to his habit of alcoholising himself. All the most noteworthy of the hours he had spent with Pattie were recalled with minuteness. In each he clearly saw that, though he had never been in her presence in a state revealing intoxication, or even excitement, his powers of reflection and foresight had been clouded, and his manner and conversation had shown a warmth which never would have been generated, except for the exhilaration of drink. From conversation to conversation his memory moved swiftly on, startling him with the gathering force of the thoughtless words and actions which, apparently insignificant at the time, nevertheless, had led in an indisputable chain to Pattie's unhappy mistake. Then, as day after day he had resolved to put her gently but irrevocably out of his reach, the glamour of drink for the hour had lured him on in his characteristic habit of procrastination; and at last, when the tardy moment of execution came, delay had made it disastrous for others besides Pattie.

With the same brightness of mental vision he could trace, as he often had traced, the origin of every abortion of protracted toil; of every failure in high resolutions; of every backward step in the laboured striving after the highest good; in fine, of almost every misfortune in his life; to his own unguarded indulgence in drink, to his own over-confidence in the strength of self-control. But he had done this a hundred—a thousand times. Was he ever thus to be tracing the origin of the wrong step? ever thus to be warning himself against his own feebleness, and then as ever act as if all this self-examination had never taken place?

His thoughts having as usual arrived so far as this in the direction of despair, as usual the reaction began; and his mind leapt naturally back to any straw of encouragement within reach. This straw of encouragement was found in the stimulus given by the discernment of a necessity for immediate action, and of the probability of that action being attended by immediate success. Remembering that his engagement with that lamp of architecture, Mr. Chamfer, was.



now at an end, he discerned the necessity of immediately seeking for other employment; and remembering an offer of work made by certain manufacturers of ornamental brass and iron work, he discerned the probability of his search succeeding. His mind, once warmed with the light of hope, was prepared to take a cheerful view of the existing state of his pecuniary resources. What with the balance still remaining of the sum he had received from Mr. Raymond Filps, and what with a cheque received from Mr. O. G. Chamfer, he found himself in possession of some forty pounds sterling, free from all claims whatsoever—that is to say, he owed nothing, and had a little money in hand for immediate uses.

This long cogitation had begun in the relaxation of lying in bed, and ended under the bracing effects of the cold water of his bath; the early despondency being probably as much due to the one, as the later cheerfulness to the other.

After breakfast—which his appetite, suffering from the alcohol absorbed over night, compelled him to limit to a strong draught of coffee—he wrote the letter of final parting to Pattie, with much tenderness and compunction, be it said, and then went forth in search of new employment.

With no grief for the loss of Kate?—no heart-sickness? Not much. There was a dull aching somewhere in his heart; but it was being acted on by an antidote—an unpleasant one, as antidotes usually are—the antidote of hopelessness and shame. He had intended to separate Pattie from himself; but the scene in which he had learnt from Chamfer and Stopp of Kate's having come into her grandfather's money had arrived, and he had not told Pattie that he did not love her; he had written the letter to Kate before that scene; but it was not sent until after the scene. Thus his action seemed to be proved beyond doubt to have been heartless and mercenary. Therefore he could only think now of Kate with hopelessness and shame. The pain of these two feelings in a measure counteracted the pain of that other feeling in his heart: but the feeling engendered by this antidotal action was not a comfortable one.

With no grief for what Kate might be suffering? Not much. A woman who could spurn a man labouring under any accusation, however base, without taking the trouble to give him an opportunity of proving his innocence, was clearly indifferent about him; such was his thought. In any case, a woman, however much she might love a man, must, on discovering what seemed to be mercenary motives on his part for pursuing her, cease there and then to love him; that was what *he* thought.

A new resolution to do without the aid of alcohol having been come to—though for the thousandth time,—it was necessary to keep to it; on the other hand, he had before him an interview with these art manufacturers of ornamental ironwork, and for business intercourse a collected manner and a steady nerve were advisable.

Therefore, for this once, quite as an unavoidable exception not to be repeated, on the contrary to be guarded against with scrupulous vigilance, he would fortify himself with a stimulant. Besides, without having recourse to other arguments, there was no doubt but that in a too sudden disuse of stimulants, an unnecessary risk was run of too severely tasking the constitution. So, on all grounds, one glass was really advisable.

Accordingly, calling in at the nearest place of refreshment, which happened to be the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' he took one glass; and, acting on an idle desire to see Mrs. Rawlins, who happened not to be visible for the time, he took a second; and then, having waited for a shower of rain which happened to fall, he took a third.

Then, but not till then, he went about the business of the day. He looked to be received with open arms by the firm of ironworkers, who had always manifested a high regard both for himself and for his capabilities. He was, therefore, a little surprised, on being shown into the room of one of the company, to be met by a remark from that gentleman no lengthier than,—

'How d'ye do?'

No grasp of the hand, not even the offer of a chair; but a pause on both sides.

'I have called on you,' at length began Matthew, 'to say that I happen to have plenty of time at your disposal just now, if—'

'Yes, I know,' observed the other.

'You know already, then, that my connection with Mr. Chamfer has ceased?'

'Yes,' replied the ironwork gentleman, somewhat dryly.

'Very well,' said Matthew, 'if you have any work to put into my hands—'

'Sorry to say we haven't, Mr. Bernock,' began the other, with something uneasy in his air.

'I shouldn't have called so soon,' continued Matthew, 'only you told me the other day that you would be very glad if I could spare you some of my time; that, in fact, you had more work for me than I could probably manage by myself. I thought you were unusually busy.'

'So we are, Mr. Bernock; but you see—the fact is—in short—'

'Don't feel embarrassed on my account, pray,' said Matthew.

'You were going to say that Mr. Chamfer has forbidden you—'

'Not forbidden, Mr. Bernock.'

'Well, has threatened—'

'Not threatened either; that is still worse.'

'In any case, Mr. Chamfer has prevailed on you in some way that is hostile to me,' resumed Matthew. 'Therefore there is no need for this conversation to—'

'The fact is, Mr. Bernock, that Mr. Chamfer has done nothing in the matter.'

'No!'

'No—that is, nothing himself. But we have been given to understand by Mr. Stopp—'

'Oh, Mr. Stopp!' exclaimed Matthew. 'In that case there is less need than ever that this conversation should go on. I will therefore wish you good morning.'

'Pray, stop a moment, Mr. Bernock. You know we cannot afford to offend Mr. Chamfer: he puts too much work into our hands. But though we cannot offer you anything ourselves, if we hear of anything that is likely to suit you, depend upon our letting you know. We know your address.'

'Thanks,' said Matthew, taking a hasty leave, with the certain knowledge that the words he had just heard were uttered in mere civility, and with no intention of the promise they expressed being fulfilled.

Nevertheless, he was obliged to admit to himself as he walked along, that he could not reasonably, as things go in this world, expect the ironwork people to act otherwise than they had done. Their interest lay in subserviency to Chamfer and his tribe, and he could not expect that interest to be sacrificed in his own behalf. One thing, however, he saw which he might expect, and with some certainty; that was the hatred of Stopp to sting him whenever in its noisome course it could reach him.

But there was work to be had somewhere, no doubt, and he had forty pounds or so in hand for present needs, and he must not bow his head before an adverse squall. Now, also, the exhilarating effects of the cold water of his bath had begun to disappear, and the after effects of the three glasses of alcohol were making themselves felt. On the whole, then, as a precaution against the threatening depression of the moment; but with a steady resolution as to the future (a resolution which must be strictly adhered to), another glass was permissible—under all the circumstances—even advisable; and as he was going home (to spend a quiet evening by himself, the first of a new period of total abstinence), he would have to pass the 'Pilgrims' Rest.' Therefore, as well there as anywhere else, especially as his curiosity and attention had become excited as to Mrs. Rawlins. Who knew but that she might in the course of conversation let fall something showing the cause of her undoubted desire to know the nature of his acquaintance with some place in the country which she had not mentioned, and who knew whether there might not be something connected with his dead father behind this desire of hers? Perhaps she might know what Mr. Chipples had so firmly refused to tell him, about that 'shame' which his father had so vaguely referred to.

In any case he would cultivate Mrs. Rawlins's acquaintance a little; for his curiosity and attention had been excited; and so, *unknown to himself, the point of uncertainty as to his future, if uncertainty there were, had been turned.*

## CHAPTER VI.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the 'Pilgrims' Rest' was crowded with pilgrims, who seemed from the reeking state of the smoke-clouded atmosphere to be resting with undiminished vigour.

The men inside were shouting in fierce contradiction and derision of each other, or exchanging confessions of a mutual regard surpassing any regard ever felt for any being in this mortal life before; the expressions of their friendly feelings being fortified with the same imaginative blasphemy as those of their hostility.

Of the women outside, huddled up in black, greasy garments, some waited with the hope of catching a chance subsidy from the wages which, after startling reduction for the week's ale-scores, were fast melting within; while others, refusing to affect faith in a hope which the Saturday nights of years had proved to be futile, made a compromise with their husbands by joining them inside and resting content with the flowing abundance of the hour.

On the edge of the gutter sat girls from eight to a dozen years, revolving the chances of their not being sent that night as delegates on the part of their parents to pray for extended credit at 'the shop,' on the strength of a propitiatory offering of a couple of half-crowns to the dread keeper of the 'book,' as a set-off against a long accumulating debt of some thirty odd shillings; while the babies in their arms looked from large reflective eyes a meek confession that a diet of soppy bread, and of milk thinned with water and thickened with something worse, had, with a swathing of damp rags in the place of other protection against the raw cold of the streets, so completely broken their natural rebellion of spirit, that they would never cry again.

Of the boys—most of them with an occasional thought to the brawl that might be looked for in the one single room where father and mother and sons and daughters all crowded by night as well as by day—of them, those who were only comparatively hungry scampered and tumbled about in the streets and the neighbouring courts and alleys, or hung round the doors of the public-house, warily watching for an opportunity of inducing some more than usually beer-sodden 'pilgrim' to give them a drink out of his beer-pot, and, failing a cigar-end, a 'chew' of tobacco; while those who were hungry in the positive degree silently stood and shivered.

Matthew entered one of those shady boxes of the establishment which, carefully cut off with partitions of glass and wood, were intended for such persons as, for some reason or other, desired to avoid closer mingling with the frequenters of the larger and more crowded spaces. The compartment he chose was already occupied by some one else, whom, on closer observation through dense clouds of smoke, wreathing heavily in the fetid air, he discerned to be no other than Mr. Leonard Skimflight.

'Why, what on earth brings you here, Lenny?' he asked, attentively reading the boy's face.

'I was passing here just as a row occurred, and when it was over, I thought I would step in for a moment to get another look at the face I discovered here—don't you remember, the face I brought you and Jack to see that night?'

He held out his hand as he spoke—breathlessly as usual—with an unclouded welcome in his open face; so that it was evident he had learnt nothing from Pattie or Kate. Matthew was pleased, but not astonished at this, as he had not, indeed, expected that either of them would make a confidant of Lenny.

'There she is—the woman whose face I was thinking of studying as a model!' exclaimed Lenny.

Matthew had already distinguished her through the smoke, and knew also that she had distinguished him.

'Yes, I remember,' he said; 'her face was to form the contrast to your Murderer's Head—a head you had sketched from some one you had encountered somewhere down by the docks, wasn't it, Lenny? But,' he continued, wishing to take Lenny's eyes from Mrs. Rawlins, who seemed to have divined that she was the subject of conversation, 'what was this row that you saw about?'

'Oh, some poor woman wanted to get some money from her husband who was drinking here, and he vowed that he hadn't taken a full week's wages, and what he had taken was nearly all due here for an ale-score, and she wouldn't believe him, and insisted that he must give her some money, and that she and her children were starving, so he got mad at last and knocked her down and kicked her, and—'

'And she, yielding to the strength of an argument of that kind,' observed Matthew, 'crawled home, and he returned to his beer-pot, eh?'

'Yes,' said Lenny, who had now recovered his breath, 'and there stands the brute drinking now.'

'His punishment will come,' returned Matthew. 'He will have spent all his money by ten or eleven o'clock, and then these smart young men behind the bar, seeing him too drunk to stand, will knock him down without fear for themselves, and fling him into the gutter. But, Lenny, to talk about yourself—how goes the portrait-painting?'

'Oh!' exclaimed Lenny, beginning to get breathless again, 'that is what I was coming to. I have something to tell you that will startle you.'

'Indeed! what is it?'

'I've given up the idea of being a portrait-painter—or of being a painter at all for the matter of that.'

'Indeed!' said Matthew, who, so far from being startled by this notification of a change in Lenny's plans, was not even surprised.

'Yes,' continued Lenny. 'But how quietly you take it, Mat! you don't seem even surprised!'

Matthew simply said,—

'Well, what do you mean to be now, Lenny?'

'Oh, I think of going out to America now.'

'What part of America, Lenny?'

'Oh, somewhere in the backwoods, you know; out in the west somewhere, you know; where you make a fortune somehow in no time, don't you know? It will be rather rough at first, but then one of mother's biggest houses down in Northamptonshire is standing empty, and her rents are not coming in very well, and so I must now learn to depend on myself—at least, more than I have done; and then people pile up fortunes so fast out in the west—the Far West, don't you know?—that I can come back again in two or three years. What do you say to it, Mat?—but I say, old man, I don't want you to go advising against it if mother should ask your opinion. Come, now, just give us your *honest* opinion about it, Mat.'

'In favour of it, you mean, Lenny?'

'Well,' began Lenny, reflectively for a moment, 'I don't want you to go discouraging a fellow when he has quite made up his plans, but I just want your *honest* opinion.'

'Well,' replied Matthew, 'my opinion is—but, Lenny, don't let us stop here any longer—suppose we dine together somewhere? It may be our last dinner together for some time, if you are going away to a distant land.'

Dining-out always had an attraction to Lenny, and the idea of receiving a farewell dinner as an emigrant leaving for the Far West so seized on his fancy, that he readily accepted the invitation.

'All right,' he said; 'and I say, old fellow, suppose we dine here?'

'Here?—what, in this den?'

'You call this a den!' cried Lenny. 'Why, look at the gilded columns, the carved capitals, the heavy mouldings, the panelled ceiling, the plate glass, the chandeliers, the glittering mirrors—'

'Which are hardly visible through the smoke,' remarked Matthew.

'Well, when I spoke of dining here, I didn't mean at this bar, of course; I meant in the cosy dining-room they have got behind, through that door there, and where they have told me they serve a capital dinner.'

'I doubt about the capital dinner, Lenny; but, however, if you have a fancy for trying, by all means let us try.'

Accordingly they retired to the dining-room behind, and were served with a better dinner than Matthew had looked for in such a house.

'Well now, Mat,' said Lenny, in high spirits, when the dinner was over, and they were settling down to a cigar, 'let us have your honest opinion on my new project. Two or three years' absence isn't much, you know.'

'Two or three years' absence wouldn't be much,' replied Matthew; 'and as yours is a nature fond of novelty and adventure, two or three years spent in knocking about in new scenes would probably do you good.'

'That's right, old man! I knew you would give me your honest opinion.'

'I was going to say, would probably do you good, provided—'

'Oh, come now, Mat, you are going to unsay all you have said in favour of the project,' interrupted Lenny, apprehensively.

'Provided,' resumed Matthew, 'you don't spend those two or three years in strengthening habits which you have already begun to form, and which, my dear Lenny, you need very carefully to guard against.'

As he said this, it occurred to him how much he needed, himself, to act on the advice he was giving.

'What habits, Mat?'

'Habits of procrastination, of vacillation, of too much planning with too little execution, and, worst of all, Lenny, of too much smoking and too much drinking.'

'I say, Mat!' exclaimed Lenny, 'I asked for your honest opinion about my project, and you are beginning to assail my character.'

'In which case,' resumed Matthew—'the case of your doing what I caution you against—you will come back with nothing more accomplished than the development of the worst habits, and the loss of two or three years' valuable time.'

'But, Mat! what a gloomy picture of things you are drawing for one on the eve of leaving his native land!'

'On the other hand,' continued Matthew, 'while increasing your knowledge of men, while cultivating the power of self-reliance, and while satisfying your taste for change and adventure; even though, at the same time, you may frequently lose valuable opportunities by moving from a place just at the very moment when it has become worth your while to stop, and even though you do not succeed in wholly checking the habits I have told you you have need to guard against, you may still be benefited by this change—on one condition, Lenny.'

'What condition, Mat?'

'On the condition that, however you may gratify your present love of change, you yet all the time give your serious attention to one thing, and that is to the business which you mean to follow. Say it is farming—very well, then, no matter how often you change your scene of action, let the action always be connected with farming. What I say comes to this—I don't ridicule your undoubted love of change and adventure; I accept it as a fact—as a fact that will last probably for some few years to come; and I say, give in to this fact if you think that you cannot possibly thrive for the present in anything more settled than a life of movement and change; but do not let the time you spend in thus gratifying your

natural inclination be a part of your life wasted ; in fine, so utilise this gratification of your wishes, that it may tend to your advancement in life.'

Lenny appeared much relieved by this termination, as it left his newly-formed scheme unassailed.

'All right, old man,' he said ; 'I'll act up to all your good advice, because your advice is always sound ; I know *you* would have too much sense to argue against my plan. Mother is not exactly against it, and when I tell her what you have said, she will see more clearly than ever the wisdom of my proposal. By the way, Mat, as usual, you haven't said a word about yourself all this time.'

It did not occur to him that he himself had not mentioned that subject until then.

'I hear you have left Chamfer's,' he continued.

'Who told you, Lenny?'

'Kate. I called round at the "Sheaf" to-day to find out when the funeral would take place, and I happened to ask after you, and she told me you had left Chamfer's. By the way, Mat, how awful this is about the old man's death ! I never thought he would go off so quick as that.'

'No.'

'Are you going to the funeral, Mat ? But, of course you will.'

'Well—er,' begun Matthew, and then he ended somewhat awkwardly with, 'I don't know.'

'By the way again, Mat,' said Lenny, suddenly, and looking at his friend with an air of doubt and curiosity, 'excuse me asking, but has anything happened between you and Kate?'

'Anything happened ? between me and—why, Lenny?'

'Why, because you seem to be in doubt about going to the funeral ; and a sort of cloud has come over your face, and when I mentioned your name to Kate, a sort of cloud came over her face also. I was wondering if anything had happened.'

'I was there last night,' replied Matthew, with clear evasion ; and then, in the endeavour to get away from the subject, he added, hurriedly, 'as to the funeral, I suppose, Lenny, one ought to wait to be asked.'

'Of course you will be asked, Mat. Why, the old man seemed to have suddenly grown quite fond of you ; and it struck me that somebody else—'

Here Lenny stopped, and began to laugh.

Then observing Matthew change colour slightly, he simply added,—

'Well, now Kate has come into the old man's money, you may consider yourself in good luck, old fellow. But I say, Mat, I have got an engagement for eight o'clock ; so you must excuse me if I leave you to finish the bottle by yourself ;—by the way, that's the third bottle we are now beginning, and I have been doing all the drinking.'



He had forgotten that he had passed the bottle at least every other time without helping himself, and it consequently escaped him that he had not drunk at the most more than half as much as Matthew; but he had not yet arrived at the years when men are given to be inaccurate the other way.

'I hope it won't get into your head, Lenny,' said Matthew, smiling.

'No fear of that, Mat. I think I can stand it better than you can, old fellow.'

The truth was, that the wine following on the spirits he had drunk before dinner had already got into his head, and he naturally therefore thought that Matthew was drunk.

'Well, good-bye for the present, old boy; I shall see you again before I start for America—of course.'

---

## CHAPTER VII.

THE door had not closed on Lenny more than five minutes, when it again opened, and Matthew turning round, saw a head thrust into the room. It was the head of Mr. Spike, and it was nodding and smiling at Matthew with an air not only of warm friendship, but also of warm approval. Presently the flannel jacket followed the head.

'That's right, sir,' said Spike, who though far from sober, did not seem quite so drunk as usual, 'that's the way to do it. I always likes to see a tip-top gen'l'man enjoyin' of his bottle o' wine; and when a gen'l'man o' my acquaintance comes to a 'ouse where I'm known, I always likes him to do the thing tip-top, and give the 'ouse a good order. There ain't many as comes 'ere with acquaintances as can order a out-and-out dinner like what you've 'ad, and then top up with three bottles o' real wine. You're a-actin' very creditable to your acquaintances, sir, that's what you're a-doin'.'

Matthew thought that if Mr. Spike was to be included in the list of his acquaintances, it would be proper to ask him to take a glass of wine.

'You seem to know all about it, Spike; I didn't know you were on such intimate terms with the movements of the household; but take a glass of wine.'

The idea had entered his mind to put a question to Mr. Spike.

'Thank you kindly, sir, and I'm proud to drink your 'ealth, and in real wine too. Well, sir, 'ere's my duty, and with it, 'ere's 'oping it won't be the last, an' 'ere's my 'and upon it, sir, an' 'ere's my 'eart upon it, sir, and I'll honour the toast by drinkin' 'earty, sir,' said Mr. Spike, emptying his glass, and placing it again so near to the bottle that Matthew thought it necessary to pour out again for Mr. Spike, who seemed much surprised at such a proceeding,

crying out, 'Well, there now, look at that ! whoever woulder thought as when I put my glass down up against the bottle as you woulder gone and filled it up like that, without ever so much as askin' me if it wouldn't hurt my 'ealth ! Well, sir, if I must, 'ere's my duty, and with it my kind regards, and many of 'em—no, that's what they say on birthdays ; but it don't matter, and so I'll honour the toast again by drinkin' 'earty, sir.'

'And so, Spike, you are on better terms here now than formerly?'

'The terms ? Well, sir, they might be better, but my terms ain't 'ard, sir. I ain't as 'ard on Mrs. Rawlins as some folks would be.'

So it seemed clear to Matthew that Mr. Spike had that day been elevating his spirits at Mrs. Rawlins's expense.

'Now, look here, Spike,' he said, 'I don't want you to divulge any of Mrs. Rawlins's secrets, but I want you to give me an answer to a plain and direct question. I have reason to believe, Spike, that you know something about Mrs. Rawlins in connection with a place called Broodley Waters.'

Mr. Spike here put on a look indicative of his being in possession of a masterful secret, and of his determination to keep it.

'As I have told you,' continued Matthew, 'I don't want you to tell me anything concerning Mrs. Rawlins, which you may know and which she may desire you not to make known to any other person ; all I ask you to tell me is this : am I in any way connected with—or to put it in a more direct way—did you ever know me or my name in connection with Broodley Waters?'

Mr. Spike screwed up one eye, and with the other seemed to be searching the depths of the past for an answer.

'Do you 'appen to remember,' he said slowly, and with the air of one anxious to give the questioned party all proper caution not to answer at random, but to reflect calmly and to answer with a care commensurate with the importance of the inquiry, 'do you 'appen to remember—'appen, I say, 'cause it may be a chance whether you do remember or whether you don't—do you 'appen to remember whether you yourself was ever at Broodley Waters?'

The look of secrecy and mystery assumed by Mr. Spike would have made Matthew laugh, only that at the moment he felt too keenly interested in the issue.

'If I ever was at Broodley Waters, Spike, I have no recollection of it,' he replied ; 'now, answer *my* question.'

'You 'aven't no recollection of it?—none whatsomever?' asked Mr. Spike.

'None.'

'I thought not,' observed Mr. Spike.

'Why?'

''Cause,' replied Mr. Spike with deliberation, and as though he was about to reveal something interesting, 'I never saw you at Broodley Waters, and I never 'eard your name there.'

Having revealed this much he observed that he would not any

longer intrude on the company of a gentleman, and retired somewhat hastily.

He had no sooner left than an uncomfortable idea seized on Matthew that he had been playing into the hands of Mr. Spike. The latter had told him nothing, or in any case what was nothing more than either an evasion or a lie; and Matthew had revealed that he had no recollection of ever having been at the place near the Severn. Was this the information desired by Mrs. Rawlins, and had she made use of Spike, as soon as Lenny was gone, to learn this?

His suspicion was confirmed on his going back to an empty box of the suffocating 'bar' before going home; for though Mrs. Rawlins this time talked with him more than before, she yet made no effort to draw him into conversation about the country, and her face no longer wore the look of vague suspicion and distrust of him which he had previously thought he could observe.

If she really had taken the trouble to make use of Spike to the end suspected, it did after all really cease to be improbable that she knew something of Matthew's previous life or of his father's, and consequently also perhaps of the ugly subject of that 'shame,' which he had heard on two occasions so vaguely referred to. Thus his curiosity and attention were more than ever excited.

The only other circumstance to be appended to the foregoing account of this day's proceedings is, that on the following morning Matthew was keenly reminded by the numbed state of his brain, the unsteadiness of his nerves, and the dark, vague fear, acting on all his thoughts, whichever way they turned, that he had kept his new resolution concerning the use of alcohol no better than the former ones.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE next few days were in part occupied by a tolerably well-sustained search for employment. His reference to the person in whose service he had last been engaged being necessarily always the same, the answer he received to his applications was also always the same, namely, that the information obtained concerning him from the abode of art presided over by Mr. Chamfer, was of an unsatisfactory nature. So the hatred of George Stopp was still able to strike at him, covertly, as became a thing so noisome, but withal potently.

Entering the 'Pilgrims' Rest' one evening, at the close of another unsuccessful attempt to find employment, some ten days after the 'farewell' dinner to Lenny, he came face to face with that young gentleman again.

'They told me I should be sure to see you about this time if I waited,' said Lenny.

It was the unfortunate truth that it had come to that. Regularity of attendance at the house of Mr. Juniper might now be considered to have constituted Matthew a duly-qualified pilgrim.

'Have you settled on the day when you really mean to start for America, Lenny?' he asked.

'America! Oh, you didn't know I had changed my mind! Of course not; how should you?'

'You are not going to leave the country then?'

'Why, didn't you know I had determined to go to China in the tea trade if I could get an appointment?'

'No.'

'Of course you didn't; how should you? Well, I couldn't get an appointment in the tea trade, so I decided on going to New Zealand.'

'Then it is to be New Zealand this time—in real earnest this time, Lenny?'

'No, not to New Zealand. I have changed my mind, and now intend going to Australia. You see, I am accustomed to make up my mind so quickly: perhaps that is the result of a certain restlessness and energy that I think must belong to my character. What do you think, Mat?'

Matthew was on the point of saying that energy, restless or otherwise, would be displayed to greater advantage if it showed itself in execution as well as in planning; but not being a self-styled man of duty, he excused himself from pouncing on this opportunity of showing his own wisdom in the shape of a sarcasm on another's weakness.

'And you mean to adhere to this resolution about Australia, Lenny?'

'I should think so! Why, look here, old man, here's the receipt for my passage money.'

'Well now, Lenny,' said Matthew, looking at the paper, 'don't let this sum, and the cost of your outfit, and the many other expenses attending your settling for a time in the new country, be thrown away. Really put your shoulder to the wheel and stick to one thing.'

'Oh, I shall have to do so. Mother can only make me a very small allowance now; so I shall have to depend on myself in a great measure, especially so far away, where I should have to wait for months to get any money from home.'

'Let me give you another piece of advice, Lenny. You will of course go out with a comfortable outfit, and you will take money enough to carry you along at first starting. Now, let me strongly advise you to follow economical lines from the outset, so as to keep as much as possible of this money by you for unforeseen occasions when you would be awkwardly situated without it; and as for your allowance, don't depend on that, but leave it as far as possible untouched. Then, after a time, when you have learnt the ways of the

country and have gained a useful knowledge of the business you are going to follow, if an opportunity occurs by which you see a reasonably safe prospect of benefiting yourself by the investment of a little money, you will have friends at home to call upon.'

'All right, old fellow. I will follow your advice; and as to following economical lines from the outset, why I must do that, because, though mother has made me a very fair advance to begin with in Australia, I've broken into it—and very heavily too—before I have even left England, for a lot of things—odds and ends, you know—which mother didn't include in my outfit.'

'And which, I fear, are quite unnecessary things, Lenny.'

'Oh, I don't know; if I don't want them when I get there I can sell them, you know.'

He did not add that they were things which, on the other side of the globe, would probably not sell for more than a quarter of what he had paid for them.

'I see by your ticket,' said Matthew, 'that you sail the day after to-morrow.'

'Yes, old fellow, and as I shall have so much to do to-morrow, I shall not be able to see you again unless you happen to call round at the "Sheaf" in the afternoon. By the way, Mat, *why* is it that you have ceased coming there?'

'I have been so very busy of late, Lenny.'

'Well, I must be going,' observed Lenny; 'so come, old man, we'll top up with just one glass more.'

'No, the one glass we have had is quite enough,' said Matthew.

'But this is an extraordinary occasion, Mat—the last opportunity that we shall have for drinking a glass together for years to come, perhaps.'

'It is just these extraordinary occasions, my boy, which cause people with the best intentions in the world against drunkenness to be ever hurrying along the direct road to it. Get off that infernal path at once, Lenny, in time to avoid presently staggering down it headlong and without the power to stop yourself.'

Here again he was taking sudden action at the very moment when most people would have thought that action on such an occasion might very reasonably be postponed. As Lenny had said, it might be years before they met again; and one glass more would have intoxicated neither.

At length they parted, warmly and with strong affection on both sides—but without the other glass.

Lenny had called the event of saying good-bye to Matthew just prior to his own departure for a remote shore an extraordinary occasion: *the occasion of their next meeting was to be more extraordinary still.*

The obstinacy which he had so suddenly manifested in refusing his sanction to the other glass, Matthew thought to be a step in the right direction. It pleased him to hope that the advantage to be

derived from it might be shared in by Lenny; and for himself he wished it might be the beginning of better things.

The moon and the stars happened to be shining very brightly overhead, and he looked up to them, as on many former occasions, with devout admiration of their beauty, and with an uplifting recognition of the image of purity which they seem to typify. He had been misunderstood, he had blundered in the conduct of his affairs in this life, greater misfortune threatened him: but could he not rise above all that?—was it not possible, notwithstanding the shadows gathering about him, once more to turn his steps in search of that better life which he had never in his worst moments wholly ceased to dream of?—might not his mind even yet arrive at that tranquillity to which by constitution he was naturally inclined, and which, again turning to the blue vault above, he seemed to see reigning in those pale constellations? When he went home he fell to the quiet perusal of some of his favourite books of philosophy, not forgetting a certain other well-known book in the reading of which he was of opinion that the others greatly assisted him.

After that he went out, to gaze again upon the stars, and to meditate on purity and tranquillity; and his course happening to carry him to the entrance of the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' he, perhaps mechanically, went in. In the smoke-laden atmosphere, and the roar of intermingled dialogue within, there was little purity, and in the somewhat frequent evictions of the pilgrims by the smart young men behind the bar there was little tranquillity. Perhaps it was the notable contrast between this and the solemn peace of the heavens outside that made him linger so long in reflection. In any case, whether it was owing to reflection or to alcohol, the next morning his brain and nerves were in as unphilosophic a condition as if the moon and the stars, and the blue vault above, and the purity and tranquillity typified there had never entered his thoughts.

Heavily, however, as he rose, he hurried off in great haste to the nearest post-office, whence he sent off a registered letter to Lenny, enclosing a ten-pound note. So, it was clear that amid his elevated thoughts of the previous evening there had entered into his mind a remembrance of what his young friend had said about his mother, Mrs. Parlby's diminished income, and of that imprudent young gentleman's inroads into the money which had been furnished him.

In this those self-respected gentlemen with whom he has been frequently held up in contrast would, in pointing to the fact, that the time seemed imminent when he would find a difficulty in finding means to liquidate the claims of those from whom he must in the ordinary course of things procure the absolute necessities of living, have found an exceedingly apposite occasion for complacently deriding him as one of those persons of whom it is said, that they and their money are soon parted.

## CHAPTER IX.

HIS sudden fall from philosophic reverie to a fit of drunkenness of the previous night would have astonished Matthew by its absurdity, if that had been its first occurrence; but as it had occurred many times before, he was no more astonished at it than the inhabitants of some countries are at seeing a warm, sunlit day followed by a snowy one.

To trace the course of his broken resolutions at this period, step by step, would be as monotonous as the course itself was to him.

Walking forth in futile search of employment, with the usual new-formed resolution, he would meet a familiar acquaintance, who happened to be on the point of going to slake his thirst at a public drinking bar. To this friend's pressing invitation to step inside with him, it did not occur to Matthew to reply, and truly—as every person still suffering from the after-effects of alcohol can truly reply—that he was unwell, and therefore could not accept it. What did occur to him was some such thought as this:—

'This is a good fellow, and he will think it most extraordinary if I say no to such a simple request without telling him of my resolution to limit myself to tea and coffee, and to be what he would call a damned teetotaller. It would make me look ridiculous to go parading my private resolutions before everybody in that way. Of course I shall have to make the confession to somebody some day or other; I can't keep it a secret for ever, I know; but this is not exactly the man I should choose to be the first to know it; I would rather he heard of it from some one else. One glass will only have the effect of postponing the commencement of the teetotal business for a few minutes.'

And then followed the rest of the reasoning, and after that the usual consequences. And so, from day to day, followed similar pitiful concessions to the great idol stuffed with straw, whose paste-board temple, on its entablature bears inscribed, in glittering letters of tinsel, the famous legend—'For the sake of appearance.'

One evening, after another day of abstinence, in passing the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' with the intention of not going in, he met Mr. Chipples creeping out of it.

'Mr. Matthew,' said that gentleman, coming forward, and then seeming to shrink back into his clothes, 'I am very pleased to have the honour of seeing you again, sir. Mr. Matthew, sir—'

Mr. Chipples appeared on the point of saying why he was pleased to have the honour mentioned, but dropping his watery eyes, he grew suddenly silent, as if it had all at once occurred to him that he was taking a great liberty in saying so much at one time before the other had spoken.

'I was very sorry, Mr. Chipples,' said Matthew, 'not to have

had the opportunity of saying good-bye to you before leaving Mr. Chamfer's.

'Oh, sir, Mr. Matthew!' exclaimed Mr. Chipples, in a tone that seemed to imply that the other was really condescending too much in uttering anything like an apology to him, Mr. Chipples. 'I can assure you, sir, that I and the gentlemen of the office are most truly sorry, pained to have lost the pleasure, the honour, of your company—I beg pardon, I mean presence, sir.'

Matthew remained silent.

'Mr. Matthew, sir,' recommenced Mr. Chipples, not only with his usual nervousness, but with a palpable fear that Matthew was going to leave him, 'I beg pardon for detaining you, but might I crave the very great favour of a word with you, in private, sir?'

And Mr. Chipples looked in suggestion and appeal at one of the entrances to the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' marked *private*.

Matthew did not wish to enter the public-house; but he had strong grounds for believing that Mr. Chipples was about to ask him for the loan of half-a-crown or five shillings, and he thought it would pain the old man's feelings to have it handed to him in the street; accordingly he went in. Being in, he thought it behoved him to justify their occupation of the box by calling for something to drink for Mr. Chipples, and not to offend that gentleman, he called for something to drink for himself.

'Mr. Matthew, sir,' began Mr. Chipples, 'I am sorry—truly sorry, sir—to be compelled once again to appeal to the well-known generosity of your heart—'

Matthew had already taken a couple of half-crowns out of his pocket.

'But,' pursued Mr. Chipples, 'through an unforeseen event, which it was entirely out of my power to avert, I am reduced to an absolute need—the most pressing necessity, sir, of procuring the sum of—'

Matthew was about to offer the two half-crowns.

'The sum,' stammered Mr. Chipples, with his eyes on the ground, and several times taking out his snuff-box, only to return it immediately to his pocket, 'the sum, sir, of—'

Matthew's only doubt was whether it was to be half-a-crown or five shillings, those sums being the usual extent of Mr. Chipples's requests.

'Of five pounds, sir.'

This being said, he shrank further into the corner where he was standing, and strove to avoid as much as possible the direct glare of the gas.

'Is this sum of absolute necessity to you at once, Mr. Chipples?' asked Matthew, who was giving a thought to the fact that he himself was still out of employment. 'Can you not possibly wait until—until—'

What he meant to say was, 'Until you have earned it;' but this was too coarse, and he hesitated.



'Sir, if I cannot raise the money to-night or to-morrow at the latest, I fear to think of what will happen.'

The result of the dialogue on this subject was that Matthew lent, or, as he had excellent reason for considering it, gave Mr. Chipples the five pounds. The point of the incident, however, was not that, but that he had to form yet again a 'new resolution,' and that the day being far spent, he postponed that event until the morrow, with the usual consequence.

---

## CHAPTER X.

THESE and similar incidents were the starting-points to which could be traced back the daily punishment of numbed brain and shaking nerves in the morning. At length the over-absorption of alcohol began to have marked effects. It was no new thing to him to have lost confidence in his own strength of will, to distrust himself as if he were another person, and to fear his own proceedings in the future, almost as much as though those proceedings were in no measure under his own control. That was a phase of mind with which he had been long familiar. But it was a phase of mind more potently felt now than ever before. To give the bare truth—this book being a narrative and not an apology—he was repeatedly, as he surmised was the case, within a little of subjecting himself to an attack of alcoholic delirium.

He did not fight his own shadow, nor did he dash his head against the wall in frenzied fear. He did not go through over and over again the measure of one dance with the regular monotony of a swinging pendulum, neither did he shriek over and over again one song with the savage incoherency of an aggravated parrot. His lips were not flecked with foam, nor were convulsive barks heard to issue from his lips.

He had not gone so far as that yet. But he was sensible of a dead, half-paralysing kind of aching not only in the brain, but, as it seemed to him, in the substance of the skull itself, as if he were returning to consciousness after having been rendered senseless by a blow. He was incapable of continuous mental exertion for more than half-an-hour at a time. His views, whether of things immediate or distant, trivial or important, were black as night. When he first went out into the streets of a morning, every window seemed to have an evil knowledge of him, and every eye to regard him with a look of menace and condemnation. He had an indescribable fear of something—of a shadowy something which his brain seemed too feeble to grasp at and calmly meditate on—of a something—'the devil knows what,' he said to himself; 'perhaps the devil himself; for it seems to me that all things round me are on the point of wavering into a chaos of unknown forms, and that I shall presently

find the solid realities of this world turned into the fantastic horrors of an eternal nightmare.'

All that he thus suffered he was still able to keep hidden from others. He could not, however, keep hidden certain outward manifestations of his disorder—the clouded, unsteady eye, the lids inflamed, and consequently drawn closer together, the heightened colour of the nose, the puffed and pallid cheeks, the trembling hands—these were palpable, and often told against him when he thought they were unobserved. Because those other inward signs were veiled by a calm demeanour, he thought that these outward signs also escaped notice.

When at length he found himself checked in the downhill course, the cause of this was not attributable to a successful effort of self-control on his own part, but to a scarcity of money. He was reduced to the step of pawning his watch, which was followed by sundry other small articles of value. And when at last employment was found, it was only in the shape of assistance to one who was himself a journeyman in his profession, and Matthew's remuneration was therefore small.

If he had still had sufficient money at command to provide for immediate wants for a few weeks, he would now have crossed over to a foreign city which he knew well, and where he was well known. The dissipation of the little ready money he had possessed on leaving Chamfer's had been caused by long delay in London. This delay had originated in the curiosity and attention which had been kindled in him with regard to Mrs. Rawlins. This curiosity and attention were now beginning to be somewhat dulled; but their result had been effected—he had not crossed over to the foreign city, but had remained in London.

His actual position was this, that he was earning a hand-to-mouth existence as the subordinate to a journeyman in his profession, that he was occupying a garret, or something like it, and that he saw no immediate chance of adding to the possession of this world's goods. The effect of this was to sober him for a time. He grew sober enough to fear the old age of a Chipples; and his want of money played its small part in preventing him from trying to obscure his fear in the use of alcohol.

For such reasons, and for no nobler, he entered upon a course of life which might fairly be called in every respect self-restrained, if not in the highest sense of the word virtuous. He returned to his old habit of study, and to the consideration of some of those lofty questions which, in the course of his reading, he had come to regard as those most nearly concerned with the moral life. In short, he had again fallen, and permanently, as he devoutly hoped, into the mood of contemplating the moon and the stars, and of cogitating on the tranquillity and the purity of those luminaries.

This much may, without derision, be noted in his favour, that his present life of self-control was not wholly owing to the worldly fears.

springing from his sobered state, and to his want of money; something was to be ascribed to the effort of his own will. To this also may be added that the apportionment of the merit due in each case was very clearly distinguishable to his own mind.

The pleasures of a life of sobriety and tranquil study were his, but he was painfully aware that those pleasures could have been greatly enhanced. It was not that they were seriously marred by unsuccessful love for Kate; that had its antidote in the shame and the hopelessness which have been touched on in the beginning of a preceding chapter. What bore upon him hardest was that which only those who have been drained of the last dregs of hope and energy can withstand with listlessness—the depressing effect of grinding poverty. For to this state, notwithstanding all his efforts to obtain sufficient employment, he had come.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

IT was at this painful stage of his affairs that he received a more than usually long letter from his old friend and tutor, the purple-faced gentleman, the Reverend Algernon Maybright, of Thatchley Rectory, Northamptonshire, whose lengthy interview with Matthew at the 'Golden Sheaf' has been described.

The following passages Matthew read over and over again:—

'Mr. Vasper, the owner of most of the property about here, tells me he wants a trustworthy, capable person to act as agent for him. He says that his bailiff knows nothing but farming, and that his lawyers know nothing but law. What he wants is somebody who knows enough of both to relieve him of all trouble connected with the management of his property. Remembering your knowledge of estate work—all the better in this case for being rather extensive in its generality than limited to profundity in a few particulars—I was not slow to propose you. When I mentioned that your last engagement was with his architect, Mr. Chamfer, he said there had been a clever draughtsman there, whom he had advised Mr. Chamfer not to get rid of; and "who," said he, "had made a capital design for the summer-house I am intending to build. Let me see; what did they call him?" Whereupon I mentioned your name. "That's the man!" said he. "His architectural knowledge would come in very useful if he chose to use it in my service. Rather a good idea to get an agent and an architect in one man." He asked me, before leaving yesterday, to write and ask you if you will take the place, and if you are willing to come down as soon as possible.

'Let me here tell you what his connection with your father may be surmised to have been. It was this Mr. Vasper's father who came into the property when your father's affairs took their second sudden change for the worse, and who on coming into it mortgaged

it as heavily as he could in order to buy these Thatchley estates ; first, because he owned and resided on a small property near here ; and secondly, because the presentation to the living of Thatchley, and the possession of certain lands in the neighbourhood, already formed a part of the new inheritance. The greater part of the inheritance as left by the previous owner, Mr. Hunston, is situated in one of the western counties, which accounts for your father, who, I always understood, managed the property for Mr. Hunston, never coming to this place except on those rare visits to your mother and yourself, when you were a child here. Your father was, as I say, as far as I understood, manager to Mr. Hunston, and therefore probably well known to him. However, he never to my knowledge acted in any capacity for the late Mr. Vasper. Was he known to the late Mr. Vasper ? And, even if so, was he known to the present Mr. Vasper ? who, as I have told you, passed the greater part of his earlier life in France, under the care of his aunt, his mother's sister—his mother being, as I have already told you, French. In either case he would, I presume, be known only under the assumed name of Bagnall, the only one which I ever knew him to use, except when he came under that of Burgon on those almost secret visits to you and your mother here ; and in any case, the present squire, on my mentioning your name as Bernock, concealed all signs of knowing it, save in connection with Mr. Chamfer's office. As to other residents, no one, I suppose, will recognise in the bearded man of thirty the youth who left this village at the age of sixteen ; and all that any one knows about you in any case is, that you lived here at one time with your mother, and subsequently with me as my pupil.

'The squire will not offer more than four hundred pounds a-year, but he says he will leave you at liberty to undertake as many other agencies as your time will admit of. There is a house in the village ready furnished, just as it was left by a late aunt of his who had a life-rent in the estates, and he says this house will be at your service rent free.

'Fear no difficulty about finding a bondsman, as I am your man for that ; so, if you have nothing better in view, and would not fear to exchange a town life for one in the country, write and tell me if you will come.'

Should he accept the offer ?—What was it ? An immediate competency ; and, with industry and judicious use of opportunities, he could add four or five other clients to the squire of Thatchley, and thus the competency might be increased to fifteen hundred or two thousand a-year. He would become a local semi-magnate ; among farmers, tradesmen, lawyers, auctioneers, parsons, companies, committees, boards, corporations a small power, a man to be written to, consulted and taken into account ; in the working out of county problems a varying factor of known—and unknown—value.

Why should he hesitate ?

The interviews, the journeyings by horse and by rail, the incessant

correspondence, the barterings, the planning of new things, the exercise of the right to command, the arbitration over other men's interests, the power to benefit and at the same time to win just approval—all this, which to the man of action bred-up to business would have been a delight, was to him distasteful. But he was too destitute of worldly means at present to indulge his yearning for a life of undisturbed study and meditation. And here was the opportunity offered him of earning the means to such a life.

It would be necessary to give up the town; and any chance that he at present had of ever getting on to the highway to success in his profession must be abandoned. But the chances of his ever earning more by the practice of architecture than by the management of estates were in the clouds; and his professional ambition might require the waiting of a lifetime for its satisfaction, and might at last end in nothing.

The result of all this was that he pawned certain other small articles of value, and on the following Saturday evening took the train from Euston Railway Station for Northamptonshire.

The sordid side of life in London, with its smoke and noise, its greasy pavements and the long blue distances of its streets, its glaring gin-palaces and the crouching misery around them, its pawn-shops and its workhouses, its police courts and its prisons, as well as countless other of its characteristics, in most noticeable contrast to its abundant splendour and magnificence—all were present to his mental vision; and as the terminus glided away from his physical sight, so all these things seemed to him to be gliding away into his past.

The pinch of poverty had come in the course which had been rapidly conducting him towards the hopeless slough of drunkenness—like a check. And now a fair view of prosperity had suddenly opened upon his gaze in the upward path—like an encouragement. From this check and this encouragement, the hope might have been formed that he would keep to the upward path.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

THE scene he looked on the next morning, by the light of an April sun, from the pleasant breakfast-room of his new home, was one that had not met his eye for fifteen years.

It was a scene in which many generations had played their parts. The only things new about it were the people, and they themselves bore names which had belonged to the place for centuries, as could be read on the grave-stones in the neighbouring churchyard. In the middle of the open space, from which radiated the three irregular streets forming the village, rested the broken steps and shattered column of an ancient cross. Under the shelter of a blackened wall

stood, in still passable repair, the public stocks—a well-preserved heirloom handed down to the peasantry from those good old times when no gentler restraint could be devised for the brawling forefathers of the place, than that of forcing them to exhibit their drunken shame to the public eye, with their feet thrust through holes made in a couple of planks.

The houses were of stone with steep thatched roofs. Some turned their doorless backs on the street, while others jutted out end-ways over the causeway, and leant forward with their high-peaked gables as if to get a better view of what was going on about the place. Some, with their fronts built, according to commoner custom, to face the public gaze, displayed on tablets, set into the masonry of their gables, figures carrying back the date of their erection, in some cases, to a period when Shakespeare was whipping a top. The windows of the place had for the most part thick stone mullions, and their casements were filled with diamond-shaped panes of glass. The lead-work in which these panes were fixed, obscured at least half of everything that was looked at through them, and, by the glass itself, the other half was distorted. By those panes had been distorted the forms and costumes of many ages; among others, probably, the forms and costumes of troopers galloping from the field of Naseby.

The action of centuries of grinding by foot and hoof and wheel, had so hollowed out the streets that the pathways had, in many parts, to be approached by short ascents of steps, fashioned as much out of the yellow earth as out of unhewn stone. As the roads grew lower, and as the feet which had ground their surface to dust had, generation by generation, turned to dust themselves, so the surface of the churchyard had grown higher. It was now so swollen that it could only be reached by going up steps, just as, in consequence, the church could only be reached by going down steps.

Having made these observations, Matthew went out to look at his garden. Its paths were straight and laid out at right angles to each other. The box borders and all the fruit bushes were trimmed with exactitude. There were yew-shrubs cut like the wooden trees in a child's toy-box, and there was a stone sun-dial covered with lichen. On the walls closing in two sides of the garden, fruit trees were trained in the shape of a fan or the backbone of a fish, and there was a long green-house which seemed, as far as he could ascertain from looking into it, to be used for the purpose of forcing small flower-pots into large ones.

The leaves had not all burst from the bud, but in this garden and in all others in view the fruit trees were clothed in heavy mantles of pink and snowy-white blossom. Under the warmth of the mild April sun, shining in a clear sky, birds were twittering, and, through the half-opened shutter of a stable forming part of some adjacent farm buildings, came the sound of horses munching corn in the leisure of their Sunday rest.

It was a garden in which a contemporary of Locke's may have meditated on that author's discourse on the human understanding, and, later, when Locke was dead, have nodded approvingly over the latest number of that sprightly new publication called the *Spectator*.

Presently the church bells began to chime their summons, and when he went forth in obedience to this call the yellow street seemed painted in bright sunshine and cool shadow.

A smell of wood smouldering on ancient hearths of brick which he now and then caught in passing an open door was familiar to him; but the faces which were turned upon his in open-mouthed inquiry had been made unfamiliar by the changes of fifteen years. They were the faces of people who looked neither so well fed nor so independent as a prosperous peasantry might be expected to look: indeed, but for the fact that he was walking in the midst of a land of liberty and wealth, he could almost have sworn that he read in most of the features before him the timid meekness engendered by frequent hunger and pressing servitude: nevertheless, there were signs in the appearance of all of cleanliness and care which were rarely to be observed amid the pallid wretchedness huddled under the shadow of the 'Pilgrims' Rest.'

As his mind went back to that place of entertainment and all its neighbourhood, the chimes came trembling down in waves from the old church-tower, bees hummed in an air laden with the scent of orchards, and it seemed to him that he had escaped from a dark prison-house, and that those harmonious chimes were ringing in for him the dawn of a better life.

Such were his observations, his reflections and his hopes in the brightness of the morning of a sunny April day—the first real day, after a gloomy winter, of opening spring.

His professional eye noticed that the chancel of the church was of a later period than the tower and the nave, that the aisles were of another, and that the porch was the oldest of all. As he passed between the grinning capitals of this ancient entrance, and under the rude zigzag ornament of its arch, and descended from its broken step into the interior, he observed, notwithstanding the shattered pavement of the floor, the decay of the high and unpainted wooden pews, the accumulated shrouding of lime-white in which carvings and mouldings were almost hidden, the loss of corbel ornaments and other artistic excrescences which had been chopped off by the psalm-singing soldiery who had stabled their horses in the edifice—notwithstanding all this—that the inside view was devoid neither of stateliness nor of solemnity.

A man, who was clerk, sexton, and pew-opener in one, but not the same person whom Matthew remembered to have formerly enjoyed the plurality of those offices, came up.

'Beg pardon, sir,' he said, putting his knuckle to his forehead in salutation, 'but are you Mr. Bernock?'

‘Yes.’

‘This is your pew, sir : parson told me to show it to you.’

And he took Matthew to a pew, high and unpainted like the rest, and of square form, capable of affording seats for twenty people, and with a stove in the middle.

It was the custom of the adolescent rustics of this place to loiter round the church-door conversing and whistling until the last moment before the commencement of service, when they would spring with a loud crash of their ironed heels upon the pavement of the church, and with blushing faces and with their heads butting out before them, rush through the ordeal of the public gaze until they had gained the safety of their seats ; where, to cover their confusion, they generally strove with all the force of their hands to stifle an apparently convulsive fit of laughter. While listening to these sounds and to the scraping of the three fiddles which, together with one flute, made up the ecclesiastical orchestra, Matthew contemplated the roof above him.

It had been the subject of many stages of repair. The massive unplanned timbers, which had from time to time been added to it, had never been introduced with any regard to its original design, but with severe simplicity of purpose had been intended only to postpone the moment of its eventual falling in. Successive generations of carpenters had recorded their belief in the soundness of their work by printing in red paint on conspicuous parts of these timbers their initials with dates. The earliest of these dates went back to the seventeenth century, the latest no further than some thirty years before. This last was accompanied by the initials of a carpenter whom Matthew had always understood to have been the last man in that parish upon whom the distinction of a seat in the stocks had been conferred. He had surpassed all others in the country round about in powers of drinking, and his fame had been great.

The memory of another person of great fame was preserved by a tomb erected beneath the self-inscribed memorial just alluded to, and surmounted by the reclining figure of some one in armour. The bones, long turned to dust beneath, were the remains of one who had fought in the crusades. In his grand old knightly way he had cloven the skulls of innumerable persons between whom and him there had existed differences of opinion on points of interest. In his grand old knightly way he had also no doubt got as drunk as the carpenter ; for the mighty deeds of the grand old times seem to carry with them a suspicious odour of alcohol.

When Mr. Maybright took his place at the reading-desk, there passed between him and Matthew a look of cordial recognition. He was in a tremulous state of nervousness as usual, but went through the service with the clear, ringing voice that had been heard aboard ship in many a strange sea.

During the earlier part of the service, Matthew had been sitting so as to face the chancel, but it occurred to him that he would thus



be badly placed for the sermon ; so, on the next occasion of sitting down, he took another seat in his pew looking across the church full on to the pulpit. On rising to his feet again and looking over the high sides of the wooden enclosure he found himself almost face to face with a large part of the congregation.

Those who, last seen by him fifteen years ago when they were growing lads, had now reached the flower of early manhood he could identify only with difficulty : in some cases the identification being only partial, and resting on nothing surer than a surmise. Of those persons who, already old at the time of his leaving the village, had since then lost their front teeth, whose hair from grey had turned to white, and in some instances had almost disappeared, the recognition was equally uncertain. The faces of those who in the interval had been traversing the uncertain confines of middle age seemed as familiar as ever : a softening touch of grey, a slightly more perceptible stoop, the facial lines a little more distinctly graven, here and there an increase in the direction of obesity, or a falling off the other way—nothing more than that. It seemed to him that his eyes and memory were keener than those of the persons he was regarding. Recognition of himself was visible in no one's face except Mr. Maybright's. Save in the eyes of that beaming face he could nowhere discern a single gleam of—

He felt a rush of blood to his heart, and there was a faint ringing noise in his ears. Having made a slight movement on one side, he saw in the shadow thrown by a heavy column across the opposite aisle two faces, whose identification left his own cheek for a few moments bloodless—the faces of Kate and Pattie.

Even before he had recovered from the shock of this recognition, the oft-repeated reference to the unoccupied house in an out-of-the-way village in Northamptonshire, to which Mrs. Parlby was going to remove, came back to his mind. This village was doubtless the one in which he was now himself come to reside ; and Pattie, as he had understood it was intended she should do, was living with her aunt ; and Kate was probably down from London on a visit. As for Mrs. Parlby herself not being in the pew with them, she belonged to a dissenting denomination, and as there was a place of meeting for the use of that sect in the village, she was no doubt taking part in the service there.

He saw signs of recognition in Pattie's face at least. But, while her cheeks flushed, Kate's retained their accustomed paleness—both, however, cast down their eyes, and seemed to take pains to avoid looking in his direction again.

'I wonder,' he thought, 'if Kate has told her. I don't think so ; but even if she has, that will not prevent me from finding means to throw her and Jack together ; he will very soon take her thoughts from me.'

## CHAPTER XIII.

HIS attention was so fixed by the discovery that Kate and Pattie were in the same village with him, that the service for some time went on without his taking any but an almost unconscious part in it. Suddenly his ear was struck by a strange voice reading in the chancel. That part of the service which is read from the communion table was being rendered by the curate of the place, who was also to preach the sermon.

This gentleman was very young, but had assumed an air of prostration greater than that usually manifested in the face and carriage of men who are very old. Under his surplice could be seen a curious-looking waistcoat, held up by some invisible means close about his neck, which was further bound about by an uncomfortable sort of linen dog-collar. His hair was so closely cropped that his ears stood out in stronger relief from his head than nature had intended. His mouth was drawn down at the corners into a pucker, and his eyes were rolled upwards, with the expression popularly ascribed to those of a duck moved in its thoughts by the sound of thunder. There was that in his countenance which in some way recalled the image of a person making a face, and at the same time resisting a desire to burst out laughing. On the whole, however, he passed for a very unhappy-looking young gentleman; and there were people who, accustomed to wonder whether he suffered from some untold source of pain, were driven to the assertion of a belief that he was secretly troubled with toothache.

By whatsoever grief his heart was secretly gnawed, it was, however, abundantly clear, as he stood before the communion table, that he was a young man of high ambition. The feats he attempted with a voice which was naturally fitted only for ordinary conversation, and the undisturbed complacency with which he passed over every freakish disobedience of his larynx to a very palpable intention to make it do something remarkable, together with certain unusual motions of his body, would have stayed a man of humbler aims, even though that way inclined.

Mr. Maybright regarded his curate with a tolerant smile. It was the look, half-indulgent, yet half-deprecatory, of a person witnessing the stilted efforts of a forward child going through a recitation before company. Some, mostly very young women, regarded, and to some extent imitated the young man with rapt attention; some, only a few, looked on as if with an angry desire to know what all this meant; others turned away their eyes with an air of meek disapproval; while by far the greater part of those present seemed unconscious of even the presence of the curate, and to be intent solely on following what was marked on the pages held in their hands.

Those of the congregation upon whom the young man's performances had the most telling effect, were the rustics whose ironed

heels had rung in so forcibly their entry into the building. They were a numerous body, and they regarded the curate with no less astonishment than delight. Their wide-opened mouths were set in a long-sustained grin. At every fresh freak of the disobedient voice, and at every elaborate gesture when he was in the pulpit, these warm recognisers of his power to amuse kicked each other on the shins, and, burying their mouths in their hands, emitted from their noses sounds of overpowering laughter.

When the church emptied itself, Matthew observed that Kate and her companion got out with as much haste as was compatible with the occasion, and without once looking in his direction. He himself was among the last to leave the building, and when at length he reached the churchyard, he found the clerk, who had passed out by a private door, waiting for him with the parson's card. On it was pencilled an invitation to lunch with that reverend gentleman.

---

#### CHAPTER XIV.

HE was received at the well-remembered parsonage with the hospitable welcome he had experienced in days long gone by.

'Well,' said Mr. Maybright, after an exchange of many words of friendship and delight had passed between the two, 'and how do you feel about slipping your shoulder into the collar down here?'

'All right,' replied Matthew; 'but, in the absence of the squire, I find myself without instructions, and therefore I don't know where or with whom to begin first.'

'Oh! you will find no difficulty about that,' returned Mr. Maybright, with a laugh. 'Mr. Vasper told me to tell you to plunge into everything the best way you could without bothering him; and to-morrow morning you will have no end of people down upon you for orders—they will give you plenty of opportunities for making a beginning—trust them for that; and you will be wanted in a dozen different places all at once. Luckily for you, there are two good horses at your service in your stables.'

'The business of these estates then will probably be enough in itself to keep my hands full?'

'Not at all, my boy. If you make good use of your time you can undertake three or four other agencies, if they turn up—and it won't be my fault if they don't turn up; for you may depend on it I sha'n't let a chance in your favour slip without seizing it. Hullo! Gurgoyle, I didn't hear you coming in.'

It was the young gentleman whose performances Matthew had that morning witnessed in the church. It was not strange that his entrance had not been heard, for he had walked in as if afraid of wearing out the carpet too soon. His whole air was that of one who, in venturing forth into the open glare of this depraved world,

suffered from a continual fear that he might presently see something which would be too much for his feelings.

After a few words with the parson on some matter relating to the church, the young gentleman turned to go.

'Stop a moment,' said Mr. Maybright; 'let me make you two known to each other. Mr. Bernock—Mr. Gurgoyle.'

'I have a friend of your name—we call him Jack,' said Matthew; 'and I have heard him mention a relative of his—a cousin, I think, he said—a Mr. Gregory Gurgoyle, who was in the Church. It would be rather odd if you were—'

As the reverend young gentleman shook his head, Matthew understood him to mean that the person named Jack was no connection of his, and therefore stopped.

'Yes, it is a cousin of mine of whom you speak,' observed the melancholy young gentleman, with another mournful shake of the head; 'a truly sorrowful case of dissipation, and—must I say it?—yes—of a darkened understanding. He is sadly, terribly wanting in appreciation of the exalted meaning, the sweet beauty, the benign influence of true religious symbolism.'

'And yet he is a first-rate Gothic architect,' remarked Matthew.

The young gentleman smiled sweetly, but sadly, as if he would say—*mediæval architecture is a great deal towards salvation*, but it is nothing compared with vestments and intonation.

'In any case,' added Matthew, 'he is a man whom I hold in no slight esteem.'

Thereupon the sorrowful young gentleman cast upon Matthew a look of infinite pity, and with one more shake of the head, classed him with those who have not yet learned to admire the offices of the Church, as performed by one of her really priestly sons, and whose eyes, therefore, are as yet in awful darkness.

'You will stop and lunch with us, Gurgoyle?' said the parson.

The curate gave another mournful shake of the head, and having placed two limp fingers in the parson's hearty grasp, and having, as it seemed, mentally framed a qualified benediction on Matthew, signified the same to the latter by a benignant smile, and then glided out once more to the sorrowful contemplation of a world which habitually neglects symbols, and yet affects to be tolerably easy in its mind.

'A most excellent young fellow,' observed Mr. Maybright to Matthew on their sitting down to lunch, 'that Mr. Gurgoyle.'

'Is he?'

'Yes; hard-working, earnest, untiring, patient and exact in the discharge of his duties; and if it were not for one thing, he would be highly esteemed about here.'

'He has the air,' remarked Matthew, as if hazarding a guess as to what the one thing was, 'of being—er—rather mopish, hasn't he?'

'Yes; he is suffering from a kind of cerebral excitement, resulting

from a complaint he took just before he made up his mind to enter the Church.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes; a complaint—what would you call it?—a sort of mild fever which has for some years been growing prevalent among a certain portion of people belonging to the Church; you saw signs of it in his performances this morning.'

'Ah-ha! I understand you,' said Matthew.

'A sort of fitful complaint that comes and goes, and is therefore of no particular consequence.'

'Has it proved at all contagious down here?'

'Well, I believe a few of the parishioners have caught it—mostly girls and young women; and I think the village grocer is beginning to show signs of having taken it.'

'What do the parishioners generally say about it?'

'Oh, most of them are quite indifferent, but some lecture me a good deal about it. They declare that Gurgoyne's case calls for stern treatment. But I think the earnest discharge of his duties and the general excellence of his character must atone for his little eccentricities.'

'That is not a hard way of looking at it.'

'I don't know whether it ought properly to be called a complaint or a fashion,' mused the parson. 'In either case, it will have its little day, and then die away like that other Sham Æstheticism of the day.'

'Yes,' said Matthew; 'Gothic has been in the ascendant for some years now. I suppose, after a time, we shall go back again to the simplicity of the Greek styles—for a time, at least.'

'Probably. Another noticeable thing about Gurgoyne is his hardihood. He not only professes certain views, but he acts on them in the face of everybody. I don't know, though, whether it ought not rather to be called impertinence. In any case, however impertinent or ridiculous his eccentricities may be, one must give the young fellow the credit of having the courage to act on his opinions. Some people who have just grounds for supposing that certain ideas of theirs are right, never have the courage to carry them out, never even the courage to confess them. But you haven't tasted that sherry yet. Try it, and fill your glass.'

---

## CHAPTER XV.

THE parson, however desirous he undoubtedly was that Matthew should try the sherry before him, had clearly also something else in view—he wanted Matthew to pass the bottle. The latter took up his own glass for a moment; then, without tasting it, set it down again, and passed the decanter.

'But you haven't helped yourself—why, bless me!' cried the parson, 'you haven't even tasted your first glass!'

As has been stated, the inception of Matthew's last endeavour—whim, he called it—to do without alcohol went back to that ignoble period of his affairs when he had been first obliged to have recourse to a pawnbroker, that is to say, no less than six weeks ago. His 'whim,' therefore, now appeared to him to be acquiring quite a respectable standing; and he knew that, in however jocular a spirit he was disposed to think of this resolution of his, it was very beneficial to him: the plain truth was, it was of the last importance to him.

But to decline to drink the glass of wine before him entailed the statement that he had dropped the use of alcohol, and that statement involved a confession of the reason why. To enter into all this appeared to him like parading his own weakness and his own virtue; and to a man like the parson, he thought nothing would be so distasteful as that. His friend was one to listen with patience and with sympathy to the weak avowals of a repentant gamekeeper or a ploughman; but he was born of an order in which reserve is a matter of breeding, and in which a self-betrayal of weakness or any effusiveness of feeling whatever on the part of any one claiming to belong to itself, would be regarded with cold surprise if not with contempt. Why should Matthew risk exciting either of these latter feelings in the parson's breast over a question concerning an insignificant glass of sherry? So he swallowed the wine, and having made that exception out of regard to what his friend might think, he thought he might as well make an exception of the whole day, and make that a day on which his teetotal whim, as he called it, was to be inoperative—it was only *one* day, after all.

'By the way,' remarked the parson, emptying another glass of wine with his usual marked enjoyment of anything good in that way, 'the last time I saw you in London was at the "Golden Sheaf." Do you happen to know a Mrs. Parlby? she used to be a Mrs. Skimflight, a sister or some other relative of the unfortunate landlord of that ancient but comfortable inn. Poor man!—what a sudden death his was! A strong suspicion, I believe, of its being brought on by over-indulgence in drinking;—help yourself, and pass the bottle. But I was asking you if you—'

'Yes, I know her, though only slightly,' said Matthew.

'Her connections have been regarded as highly respectable people in this county for generations, I believe,' continued Mr. Maybright, with something of condescension in his tone. 'Well, she is come to live in this parish—got a house here which is too large to let to any one as an ordinary villa, and without land enough to let to a farmer; so, as she can more easily let the house she used to occupy in Northampton, she thought she would come and reside in this one herself.'

'Yes, I have heard something of this before, but I did not know

until to-day that this was the village she was coming to live in,' said Matthew.

'Do you know the girls who are with her? One, a very amiable girl, they call Pattie; the other—poor girl!—is—let me see—Kate, I think. She is not only amiable, but very clever—quite a lady; you must have seen her at the "Golden Sheaf."'

'Oh yes, I have seen her,' observed Matthew, wondering what was the meaning of the parson's apostrophe, 'poor girl!' 'I saw both of them in church this morning, and,' he added in a sort of nervous fear that if he did not say something he would betray signs of mental disturbance, 'I wondered why Mrs. Parlbay was not with them.'

'Oh, she goes to a dissenting meeting here. The girls seem to have been brought up to come to church. But I was asking you if you know them at all—if you have any speaking acquaintance with them?'

'Well—ah—in fact, yes.'

'Then, as you will not for the present have much society down here, I should advise you to cultivate their acquaintance.'

'Ya-as.'

'Don't be afraid of the sherry,' observed the parson. 'It is some of the lot the captain allowed me to lay in on touching at Cadiz on my last voyage home.'

'Not much of it left now, I fear,' said Matthew.

'Alas! no, my boy!' sighed the parson. 'But let us enjoy it while it lasts.'

There was no service at the church in the afternoon; the parishioners, as Mr. Maybright observed to Matthew, for the most part preferring evening attendance. Accordingly, the reverend gentleman spent the afternoon, until the dinner-hour, in chatting with his old pupil, in strolling with him about the parsonage grounds; in taking a look at his hot-houses, his two over-fed horses, his fowls and his pigeons; in taking a little chill and in going in to take a glass of something to keep it off,—'spring weather,' as he observed, 'being very dangerous in its sudden chills, and requiring to be carefully guarded against.'

After dinner Matthew accompanied him to church, and heard him pronounce a good unambitious sermon: a discourse in which the preacher sought not to startle, either by painful elaborations, or by abruptly flippant colloquialisms. His attempt was no more than to express an intelligible argument in fair, round, intelligible periods; and Matthew knew that the occasional glow of his friend's eloquence was due not more to the after-dinner wine than to the promptings of an upright understanding, and the warmth of a tender and affectionate heart.

After the sermon, Matthew was taken back to the parsonage for a last cigar that night, and there received sundry useful particulars from his old instructor with regard to the numerous persons with

whom the new agent was about to be brought in contact for the first time.

Walking homewards along the devious ways of the village, which now at night was more than ever redolent of the smell of smoke arising from wood smouldering on ancient hearths, Matthew found himself wondering what the parson meant by his apostrophe of 'poor girl!' in regard to Kate.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

MATTHEW had, after a great deal of riding hither and thither, a great deal of listening, a great deal of talking—a great deal more of this than he had thought necessary—and a great deal of writing, brought his first day's work to a conclusion, and was giving himself up to meditation over the fire—and—to be accurate in a detail which has been pursued with sufficiently obvious persistence in the course of this narrative—over a glass of grog.

This glass of grog had been the conclusion of a syllogism of which the premises had been broadly as follows: he who drinks to excess one day ought, in order to prevent a too sudden reaction of the nerve system, to drink at least one glass on the following day; he had on the previous day, acting on grounds right or wrong—undoubtedly wrong—drunk to excess; therefore this glass of grog to-day.

While acting on this piece of reasoning he was interrupted by the entrance of the elderly woman whom he had found installed in the new household as his housekeeper.

'Please, sir,' said she, 'there's a person in the kitchen wants to see you.'

'Who is it, Priscilla?'

'I don't know his name, sir.'

'Somebody connected with the estate? Won't to-morrow morning do?'

'He doesn't belong to Thatchley, sir.'

'Well, but won't he say who he is or what his business is?'

'No, sir,' replied the housekeeper, beginning to titter; 'he's a very queer person, and all I can get him to say is, that you don't rightly know his name, but, to repeat his own words, *that he's a-cove you know of.*'

'Oh, well, you had better ask him to step in here, I suppose.'

In a few moments a shuffling step was heard outside, and the housekeeper showed in no other person than Richard.

He had his hands in his pockets as usual, and carried his cap under his arm. His first intention seemed to be to spit into the fireplace, but he checked himself in time, and merely went through the form of wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Then he regarded Matthew as if he were desirous of knowing how the latter happened to find himself at present.



'Well, Richard?' observed Matthew at length.

'I heard you was come,' remarked Richard.

'Ah—h.'

'And I saw you yesterday with the rev'rend gent.'

'Indeed!'

'And I saw you again to-day driving.'

'Ah!'

'So I thought I'd just look in,' said Richard, adjusting a falling log in the fire with his foot, 'and see how you was gettin' along.'

'Very kind of you, Richard. But now, in the name of wonder, how came you down here at all? I heard you had been taken on at the "Golden Sheaf," on your leaving Mr. Chamfer's, and after that I lost sight of you. How then did you happen to turn up here?'

'Who?—me?—why, I came down with the Young Un, of course.'

'With whom?'

'You know.'

'You mean that Miss Kate brought you down here in her service?'

'She said that the other missis's—Mrs. Parlb'y's man as looked after the pony and the garden and so on, was laid up with rheumatism, and that if I liked to come, why, I could fill his place until he got well, and then p'raps she'd be able to find somethin' else for me down here.'

'But why didn't she leave you at the "Golden Sheaf" until she goes back, Richard?'

'She isn't goin' back. She don't belong to the "Sheaf" now.'

'She has sold it then?' observed Matthew, who thought this obviously the proper thing for her to do.

'It had to be sold.'

'Under the will?'

'Under the *will*!'

'There was a will, wasn't there, Richard?'

'Oh yes, there was a *will*.'

'Well?'

'Well, a will isn't much—all alone of itself, it isn't much.'

'Quite so; but—'

'Well, the old man willed all he'd got to the Young Un; and he thought he'd got a great deal; but what he'd got wasn't nothing at all; when they paid his debts off it wasn't nothing at all.'

Matthew's head dropped on his hands over the fire.

'Nothing at all,' said Richard. 'I thought I'd come and tell you that, guv'nor.'

'Yes,' said Matthew, still musing over the fire.

'And so the Young Un is living with Mrs. Parlb'y, because the old man didn't cut up worth nothin' at all,' pursued Richard.

'Yes,' said Matthew, in the same manner as before.

Here Richard remained silent for several minutes, with the

appearance of one turning something very important over in his mind.

'Guv'nor,' he observed at last, 'who holds your horse for you when you go out driving? I see you don't take a groom with you.'

'No, my man has got enough to do at home in the garden without going out with me.'

'I was thinking that it must be rather awkward, driving out with no one in the trap to mind your horse for you. Now, don't you think you'd find a cove like me rather advantageous, guv'nor?'

'It's worth thinking about, Richard, and when Mrs. Parlbys man gets well again, and she requires you no longer, come to me; and whether I take you on as a groom or not, I'll find you a place of some sort.'

'Thank you, guv'nor. Well, good night, guv'nor.'

'Good night, Richard.'

Matthew's thoughts were naturally busy. He understood now the parson's apostrophe concerning her. If he could work his way in his present calling up to a good income, could he not by renewing his offer to Kate, who was now penniless, as it seemed, prove to her that his previous offer had not been a mercenary one. He had recovered from half-a-dozen love attacks, and he knew that the inevitable result of continued separation from Kate, without receiving encouragement from her, would be that he would be cured of this one. Shame at being thought to have acted basely, had, as has been remarked already, deadened the pain of rejected love; but this love had so far still maintained a vigorous existence in his heart, and he was strongly moved by a desire to clear himself of the charge of baseness.

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE next evening, just as he had finished dinner, a note came from the parson asking the favour of Matthew's company that night. The last sentence of the note was this, 'I very much want your assistance.' Matthew sent a message in reply, promising to be on the spot at half-past eight.

Punctually at that time he found himself in the parsonage grounds. The sound of music came from a well-known room.

'He's got some people there. What a nuisance!' exclaimed Matthew to himself.

He had just knocked, when a well-remembered voice rose into a well-remembered song.

'The deuce!' he muttered.

It was Kate's voice. If he had not sent the message back, he would have turned away from the house, and invented some excuse for not going. It was not merely very awkward for him, but it

would be still more awkward for Kate. If she was likely to suffer from any embarrassment at all on encountering him, how much more trying would it be for her to see him enter the room just when she was in the middle of a song! She would not have so fair a chance of concealing emotion as himself. If he had not knocked, he could have waited until the song was over. He devoutly hoped that his signal had not been heard. He was doomed to disappointment; for the parson, impatient at the delay, himself rushed to the door, and grasped Matthew by the hand.

'So glad!' he exclaimed. 'I have got some friends of yours here.'

Matthew smiled, but somewhat faintly; and he made the act of disposing of his hat and over-coat and stick as long a one as possible.

'Come along,' said the parson, whom this unaccountable slowness on the part of Matthew was making rather fidgety.

'Oh, I wouldn't run the risk of interrupting that song on any account,' said Matthew. 'I'll wait here till it's over.'

'No, no, come along. You won't interrupt the song.'

And Matthew found himself almost pushed into the room. Kate had come to a pause between the first and second verses, and the parson was heard to utter in a low voice, a hasty apology for having left the room, and to beg the singer not to stop. Sitting where she did, she could hardly be supposed not to see Matthew, and looking straight at him, she inclined her head with so cold an air of recognition, that he felt more pained for the moment than he would have been at her not recognising him at all. Then she went on with the song without embarrassment.

Almost mechanically he muttered a few words of greeting to Mrs. Parlbv, and he knew by the ready way in which she offered her hand, and by the kind welcome of her words, that no thought hostile to himself had been allowed to enter her mind. Whatever suspicions Kate herself might entertain concerning the uprightness of his character, it was evidently not her intention to communicate these suspicions to others.

He now turned with some curiosity to Pattie, who was there also, and as he did so he determined, with a force of language which would have startled those present, if it had been spoken, that this would be the last encounter of the sort for many a long day—at least, until he had removed himself from the equivocal position in which he stood at this time.

Pattie showed signs of perturbation, and making but mute acknowledgment of his salutations, turned away, and took up her stand near Kate. He could not, of course, tell whether she was suffering from mere embarrassment or from resentment at his having really acted on the intention expressed in his letter of adieu to her; still less whether she had been taken into Kate's confidence. He felt almost sure that silence upon the subject of what had passed

between him and Kate, had been maintained by the latter with every one, not excepting even Pattie herself ; for he knew that Kate was a young lady who, in addition to having too much generosity of spirit ever to excite useless animosity against one whom she thought she had herself sufficiently punished, was much too astute in the affairs of this life to utter anything tending in the smallest degree to compromise herself in connection with an affair which, under the light it had so far shown in, reflected discredit on one party at least—that is, of course, on Matthew.

The latter falling into talk with Mrs. Parlbly, Mr. Maybright, to his great astonishment, found the girls left entirely to himself. Having sent off so hurriedly to Matthew expressly out of consideration for his two younger visitors, he was a little annoyed at seeing his effort to provide them with the conversation of a younger man than himself come to nothing. He was not only annoyed, but puzzled.

It had never been a characteristic of Matthew's nature to push himself forward in the presence of others ; quite otherwise, unless his interest was keenly excited by the subject under discussion, he had always been too much given to silence, many people pronouncing him to be shy, while a few inclined to the opinion that he was perhaps only stupid ; the fact being that he was somewhat lazy, there generally weighing down upon his forces a heavy mass of mental inertia, which he would throw off for large results, but which for petty ones he rarely attempted to move ; notwithstanding, the parson was puzzled, for he had never before known Matthew to act as he was now doing, in deliberately shunning a couple of girls who were not only very amiable, but very good-looking—'positively handsome,' the parson mentally observed. He also mentally observed 'it was quite clear there was a screw loose somewhere.'

'Mat,' he suddenly said, 'Miss Kate was talking just before you came in of going over and seeing this astonishing collection of skeletons in the crypt of that old abbey across the country.'

'Oh, but after all, Mr. Maybright,' said Kate, hurriedly, 'I don't know that I—'

'Oh yes, yes, you *would* like to see it. Now, don't think you're giving any one trouble ; on the contrary, Mr. Bernock will be delighted—won't you, Mat?—to drive—'

'No, really, Mr. Maybright,' broke in Kate ; 'I am quite sure, on reflection, that I should not care to go. You know—'

'Yes, yes, I know,' interrupted the parson, laughing, 'that you would like to go over and see this wonderful spectacle.'

'But, Mr. Maybright, as I was going to say, I have already seen a larger collection than this abroad, and I remember now that it was not at all an agreeable kind of exhibition—'

'Oh, certainly not,' put in Pattie. 'Most disagreeable !'

'Yes,' observed Mrs. Parlbly ; 'it always seemed to me a morbid taste that leads people to such a sight.'

'Oh, now, come, excuse me,' bubbled the parson, in his laughing way. 'You're all afraid of giving a little trouble. It will give Mr. Bernock, now, to begin with, the greatest pleasure in the world. There is my little break, and Mr. Bernock will act as coachman.'

Matthew would, of course, have liked the parson to beat, but he saw that both the girls were determined not to join in any expedition with himself; and to save them the unpleasantness of having to make a plainer manifestation of their intention, he said,—

'It would give me great pleasure, of course, sir, to make one of such a party; but I'm sorry to say I am at present far too busy to give up an entire day to pleasure.'

The parson looked thunderstruck.

'You must remember, sir,' said Matthew, with a smile, 'that I am only just beginning my work here, and that, therefore, I am much more engaged now than I shall probably be after a time.'

'There *is* a screw loose somewhere,' thought the parson.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Mrs. Parlby and the girls rose to go, he got ready to see them home, and turning to Matthew, said,—'You can come with us, Mat,' in a somewhat doubtful tone of voice, for he wondered now what reply would be made to this suggestion.

'Yes,' said Matthew, in a purposely absent manner; 'it's all on my own way home.'

'Yes,' thought the parson again, 'there certainly *is* a screw loose somewhere.'

On the way, while Mrs. Parlby and Pattie walked with Mr. Maybright, Kate, to Matthew's surprise, fell back to his side.

'Mr. Bernock, I have a favour—a request to make of you,' she said.

'You have only to say what it is,' he began.

'It concerns a matter,' she continued, cutting him short, 'which does not admit of any reluctance I may feel to enter into conversation with you deterring me from saying what I am about to say.'

He knew her to be one of the gentlest and most amiable of women, but he knew also that she had the quickness of decision, and the firmness in acting on it, that were so wanting in himself, and therefore he was not at all surprised at what she said.

'Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp thought it necessary, from some cause or other, to tell me what had passed between you and Pattie.'

'I was quite sure they would not omit doing so,' observed Matthew.

'But they had the good feeling, or the consideration for themselves, not to mention to any one else a matter which was a pleasant

one neither to Pattie nor to any of her relatives or friends. At my particular request they did not even mention it to Mrs. Parlyb, consequently, in her ignorance of what has occurred, and in a desire to show common civility to you, she will most probably occasionally invite you to her house. The request I have to make of you is, that you will not take advantage of the opportunity thus presented to you of renewing your acquaintance with Pattie.'

'Do you persist in believing,' he asked, 'that my feelings toward your cousin are such as would induce me to seek to marry her? Do you persist in believing that I am in love with her?'

'I never thought so, nor do I think so now; that is why you ought not to desire to renew your intimacy with her, and that is what makes your conduct towards her, until the day after my grandfather's death, inexcusable.'

'On the day you speak of,' he returned, 'you refused to hear me in explanation of that matter. Will you hear me now?'

'No explanation could possibly be satisfactory.'

And she was walking on to join the others, when she turned again, and said,—

'I can at least rely on your strict attention to my request?'

'Certainly,' he replied.

'She spoke,' he thought, after bidding all good night, 'as though she felt that she has still power over me to secure obedience to her wishes.'

And the thought pleased him, and he wondered if the time would ever come when all should be cleared up between her and himself again. He had been very temperate in the way of drinking that day, and consequently he found himself in his 'melancholy mood,' as he called it. This mood, though indisposing him to conversation, and nearly always accompanied by a certain languor of body, was always welcome to him, for in it he felt safe. It was characterised by a disposition to general contemplation and to good resolutions. Accordingly, he walked about among the ancient structures of the place, listlessly, but with a pleasing tranquillity of thought. He thought over plans for bringing Jack and Pattie together; he reflected on sundry vastly uncertain topics of mental and moral science; he contemplated many striking lights and shadows thrown by the moon upon the old church and along the time-worn street; he turned his eyes a good deal in the direction of the moon herself, and he determined to make a more strenuous effort than ever to evade the multitudinous inducements to excess in drink.

Reaching his own house, he found awaiting him there one of the tenants, the occupier not only of the squire's largest farm, but of considerable lands of his own in an adjacent parish, one of the class who in the country are called 'gentlemen farmers.'

'Excuse me for waiting here to see you so late,' said this gentleman, who had a very free-and-easy manner, 'but that affair is getting urgent, and I am going to drive over early in the morning to see my lawyer.'

Then Matthew's mind had to descend from mental and moral science and the moon, to questions of very limited locality indeed.

'But all this talking makes me parched,' said the farming gentleman, when the business was finished; 'and you haven't yet asked me what I'll take to drink.'

It was only the third time he had had occasion to talk with Matthew, but he cultivated the free-and-easy trait in his manners as a merit.

'I beg your pardon,' said Matthew, getting out some bottles and glasses and a box of cigars.

'No, no wine for me,' said his visitor. 'Just a little weak brandy and water. But you're not going to let me drink by myself?'

Matthew thought it would look cold and inhospitable to do so, and mixed a glass for himself, lighting a cigar at the same time.

Then, as the farming gentleman was able to give him a good deal of very useful information concerning that part of the country and the people residing in it, and was very willing, in fact, almost determined to communicate his knowledge, his host begged him to take another glass, and would not hear of its being a 'weak' one this time. As the night wore on, and one glass followed another, Matthew grew less and less sensible of his visitor's free-and-easy vulgarity, and began to find him more and more interesting; and when at length he found himself alone, he felt no willingness to pursue his contemplation of either philosophy or the moon, but went to bed with a disagreeable consciousness that it would not be until after a hard morning's work on the following day, and a good lunch, that his brain would have regained its normal state of serenity.

Thus the daily yielding to insufficient excuse, which ends in making unsuspected drunkards of hundreds of thousands, was going on with him also.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE orchard-blossoms had fallen, the tender colours of spring had turned to darker shades, and the full splendour of summer was come.

Matthew had gained the management of another estate in addition to the squire's, and for some months he had been busy morning and night. At first the necessity of making himself master of a various multitude of details had kept him ever in action, and his mind had little time to fall back upon itself. Gradually, however, as the need for entire abandonment of self to the interests of his employers grew less, his hours of leisure increased. Books and studious meditation again came into his life. But they were no longer a sufficient resource to him. There was a something wanting, and against his own inclination to believe that

the resources in himself were ample, he at length began silently to confess that time sometimes dragged on his hands.

Formerly, when his life had been most lonely, he never would have made such a confession to himself. But he had come into habitual contact with two women of refined breeding, and they had left their mark on him. Pattie's lovable nature—as a thing with which his contact had been daily, and not fitful or fleeting, as certain other of his more questionable contacts with women had been—had first drawn him a little out of himself. What Pattie had begun Kate had finished; and her influence still held strong sway over him. She not only added to her beauty a graciousness of a sort that he had never before noticed in any other woman, but she showed, in combination with no mean understanding and cultivation, a mixture of gentleness and force in her character which made her power to influence him almost boundless. What surprised him most were the unmistakable signs of good breeding in her. How she had acquired and retained this with such people as the Chamfers and the Stopps, and in such a house as the unfortunate Harkles' had always been a wonder to him.

How far he owed this growing sense of time sometimes dragging with him to his brief but happy intercourse with Kate, he did not care to consider. He only knew that time did drag, not sometimes only, but frequently.

He had been awakened to a sense that there is a great joy in this life; and he, who in a hard-working life had never thought his time wasted except when spent in drunkenness and other debauchery, now, though still working laboriously and well, considered that his whole life was being wasted because that joy was not his.

The full splendour of summer was come. He saw the woods and valleys of Thatchley bathed in a golden mist under the light of the morning sun, and he marked their solemn hush when the moon rose over them at night. He thought that for some these beauteous evenings must be so many hours of calm delight. For him they—yes, for him things seemed greatly changed in the past nine months—for him these balmy evenings dragged. He was companionless.

He was very kindly treated by the people with whom he came into contact in the neighbourhood and round about. Many of them asked him to their houses and showed a great willingness to welcome him. They were mostly lawyers, doctors, parsons, and wealthy farmers, including sundry gentlemen like the one who prided himself so much on his free-and-easy manners. He was sensible of their kindness, and he was careful to cause offence to none of them; but he was forced to confess to himself that though they were nearly all well-bred people their society bored him. Owing to his early connections with the parson, who was a man, as has been said, of what is commonly called 'family,' he knew what society amongst those whom the world delights to honour is like;



and he knew that, if he himself had been born or ranked amongst them, that kind of society also would have bored him. He was therefore not surprised at his discovery that the society into which he was now invited had no attractions for him.

Riding along one day he met the gentleman with the free-and-easy manners.

'Bet a pound I know where you're going,' said the latter, pulling up his horse.

Matthew thought this didn't much concern the free-and-easy gentleman; but meeting vulgarity with good humour, he said with a smile,—

'Well?'

'You're going up to old Hicks's,' replied the other, also with a smile, but a very leering one.

'Right,' returned Matthew, prepared to move forward.

'Go up there pretty often now, don't you?'

'Well,' said Matthew, still good-humouredly, 'business calls me up there rather often now. You know, of course—everybody hereabouts does know, I believe—that Mr. Hicks is going to give up his farm. His health is giving way, and the farm is too much for an old man—it is too large a holding for any man to rent, I think. It's too far away from your place for you to care to take any part of it?'

'Yes, I don't want any of it. But—why—why, now, *you* might take a part of it, or all of it?'

'I?'

'Why, yes, you,' replied the other, looking at him with vulgar scrutiny. 'Give up your agencies, and make it all right with the daughter. She isn't a bad-looking gal, and the old man, they say, has saved up forty thousand pounds, and he's as good as gone already: clean gone off his head, at all events, so they say; and they're talking of putting him under care. Good chance for you with the daughter. Ha-ha-ha!'

'Oh, I see!' said Matthew; and with a good-tempered nod to the free-and-easy gentleman, he rode on.

He knew that old Mr. Hicks was in bad health, and was very rich for a farmer, and that his daughter was far from bad-looking, and that she was always very gracious to himself; but neither she nor her father's money interested him. He had not thought it necessary, however, to say this to the free-and-easy gentleman, or to mention to him that he, Matthew, happened to be already in love with some one, who happened to be a lady, and that Miss Hicks was too much grown-up now ever to be turned into one herself.

It seemed to him that many amongst his new acquaintances took an extraordinary interest in his welfare. Several others besides the gentleman he had just met had shown the same good-natured officiousness in directing his attention to what they regarded as the

most likely matrimonial openings for him. In some cases this was done with a certain amount of vulgarity ; but in all with unmistakable kindness. The truth was that Matthew had made a very pleasant impression on everybody, and had come to be a great favourite in those parts. After a while, however, his newly-acquired friends felt bound to agree with each other that the 'young man' was either strangely indifferent to his chances in life or very hard to please.

---

## CHAPTER XX.

ONE evening he drove over to the market town to do some business which he could not conveniently do on the morrow, and which at the same time he thought did not admit of postponement till after then. The man whom he went to see appeared, as soon as the matter had been arranged, to be in a hurry to leave his own house.

'I promised to call at the "Boar's Head" this evening,' he said.

The 'Boar's Head' was the principal hotel of the place, and was known all over the county as an old resort of irreproachable respectability.

'Most of the lesser lights of the town gather there of an evening,' he continued, with a laugh. 'You may say we've grown into a sort of club. Drop in with me for ten minutes—won't you? A business man in your position ought to know everybody in his neighbourhood.'

Matthew quite agreed with the truth of this, and was not at all indisposed to a little amusement. The dreamy hush of the woods and vales of Thatchley, and the pale light of the moon rising over them, would have drawn him bowling swiftly back over the country roads on the conclusion of his business, if—if some one had been waiting to enjoy the dreamy hush and the pale light with him. As it was, he found in the noisy talking and laughter and the smoke-clouded light of the coffee-room at the 'Boar's Head,' something more agreeable than the woods and the moon, as taking his thoughts more from himself.

The coffee-room was open to all who chose to enter ; but as it was frequented for the most part by those who knew each other, and whose visits to the place were almost regular, these gentlemen had come to regard themselves as constituting, in the words of Matthew's companion, 'a sort of club.'

There was a person in the malt-trade who, in return for what the brewers did for him, did for them, from the earliest to the latest wakeful hour of his daily life, all that could be done by personal example ; and there was a person in the leather trade, whose own hide was so badly dressed, that it was being constantly excoriated in litigation with his fellow burghers. There was a printer and bookseller, who was also proprietor of a very new local newspaper,

which was intended to snuff out a very old one. There was an ironmonger, who not only had a shop where he sold things which he hadn't made, but also a small factory where he made patented things which he couldn't sell; and there was a draper, who had absorbed into his original place of business two adjacent shops, and was expected, on the expulsion of a bankrupt tailor, to absorb a third, previous to becoming bankrupt himself. There was a grocer, whose number of young men seemed more than the number of his customers was likely long to support; and there was a timber merchant, whose yards were so extensive, and visible stock so small, that one might suppose he had cleared the ground with a view to growing his own timber.

Besides these and many others, there was a sporting doctor; and also a captain, retired from the army, who was considered to be the finest judge of wines in the place; and if he wasn't, it could not be from any want of practice on his part in tasting. There was a veterinary surgeon, who was a crack rider in steeplechases; and an auctioneer, who had never been on a horse in his life, but who was a great authority on everything connected with betting on the turf; and there was a young lawyer who, after protracted attention to the landlady's daughter, and to the billiard-table, had come to the belief that all his clients called when he was absent from his office, since, notwithstanding that a card, endorsed with the words, *Back in half-an-hour*, was visible on his door during the great part of the day, no one ever called when he was present there.

It was into the company of such examples in their profession as these, that Matthew found himself conducted.

The first topic coming under general discussion was wine, on which the whole company, while not omitting individually to slip in indications of their own proficiency on the subject, referred very respectfully to the opinions of the captain. That gentleman seemed to be quite as fine a judge of brandied wines as most people.

The price of coals then turned up, giving the doctor an opportunity of reflecting disagreeably on a coal merchant who was present, in a denunciation of the greed of coal-dealers in general; but a notorious trial in which several doctors figured as witnesses, being adverted to, the coal merchant retorted by asserting that medical testimony was always absurdly contradictory, and therefore never worth a pin. A hot discussion followed, in which the maltster, who stood up for the medical profession, was defied by the printer.

The captain at length tried to sum up the inquiry by calling the coal merchant a fool; whereupon he was advised by the tanner to withdraw the offensive epithet, and then, happily, the subject was considered to be exhausted.

After that the auctioneer who had never been on a horse in his life, was allowed to figure prominently on the prospects of the turf, until the captain told him he was an ass, and challenged him to give the name of the horse which won the first Derby. The

auctioneer, not being prepared with the information, prudently affected interest in a conversation springing up in another part of the room.

All this time Matthew, keeping pace with the friend who brought him into the place, had been drinking and smoking ;—drinking at first slowly and with a constant intention of rising to go in another five minutes, and then unstintedly and with a growing conviction that there was no occasion to hurry himself on that one evening in particular—the first evening he had passed in the town.

Presently something led to a remark upon a question which from time to time had largely occupied his thoughts, and in a few minutes a loud discussion was in progress. Those who were the most positive in their opinions and assertions upon the question, which was one upon which nothing absolute has yet been, or seems, at present, likely to be, arrived at, showed hardly any knowledge of it at all, but succeeded in greatly perplexing each other. The printer, as the literary authority present, essayed to give judgment on the question. But his own acquaintance with the subject, though greater than that of the others, was only superficial, and he came only to wrong—though apparently very logical—conclusions.

Here Matthew, whose tongue was now loosened by what he had drunk, intervened and ventured to point out one or two instances where the printer could not possibly be right. All the rest, to whom the printer, as being able in most instances to show himself their superior in matters requiring in some measure a habit of reading, was extremely obnoxious, welcomed this intervention with great approbation. They hoped to see the dogmatic printer hopelessly put down. The latter, resenting contradiction in a place where his own pre-eminence in matters outside the range of ordinary business knowledge had never been questioned, unwisely challenged the new-comer's corrections. Matthew in a moment launched into details, and, in a few minutes, found himself drifted into a complete argument. When drawn into speaking on a subject of which he was master, he always spoke easily and forcibly. All except the printer were delighted, and emphasised each one of Matthew's conclusions with loudly uttered signs of approbation ; which, however, were intended to endorse not so much the young agent's success, as the printer's discomfiture. Matthew was not easily moved to talk, but neither was he averse to enter into an argument that called for knowledge and skill to conduct it. When he finished, his hearers were not nearer to a solution of the question than before ; the nature of the subject precluding the possibility of that ; but the whole thing was now viewed by their minds, according to their several capacities, more clearly than it had ever previously been. Matthew knew this, and the sense of power to influence the thoughts and opinions of a number of other people was, in his condition at the moment, pleasant to him, and he thought to himself that after

all an evening like this, even though spent in such company, was not altogether disagreeable.

The next morning, waking up with a numbed brain and furred tongue, and with no appetite for anything but his coffee, he called himself a fool. The incongruity of him, a business man, having been holding forth in a coffee-room, at a tavern, on questions of high philosophy, struck him with merciless force. He thought it must have appeared absurd to the frequenters of the coffee-room themselves; and he imagined them laughing amongst themselves about 'Vasper's new agent,' and tickling each other with jocular remarks about the value of so much eloquence and learning in questions relating to the letting of farms and the building of barns. He thought too of the astonishment of his employers on hearing that their agent was given to spouting on philosophy and displaying his learning to the lesser lights of the borough. He knew he had as much right to express his opinions as the most potent personage in the county, but he knew also that country gentlemen have very decided views in regard to the fitness of some things.

He saw also that he had encountered what might prove to be another pitfall in his future. If temperance in the use of alcohol was to be one of the achievements marked down in his plans for the future, the 'Boar's Head' was a place to be avoided.

All these things he saw with great clearness; for it was characteristic of him to see, in most cases, what was right and proper with great clearness. It was characteristic of him also that three days afterwards, having again occasion to drive over to the market town in the evening, he thought he might drop into the coffee-room at the 'Boar's Head' for five minutes—if only just to keep up a knowledge of 'some of the lesser lights' of the town—and that it was midnight before he left it. There was always something which afforded very reasonable grounds for regarding it as extremely advisable to drive over to Carborough in the leisure of the evening, without interfering with the business of the day; and so, many evenings were now spent at the 'Boar's Head'; each evening, it should be mentioned, being followed the next morning by a strong determination that it was to be the last evening of the sort.

Thus he was once more on the road along which things are seen only through the mist of alcohol.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

ONE morning, gathering the reins into his hand, with one foot already on the step, he was made to pause by hearing his groom say,—

'Hold hard, sir, here's the rev'rend gent a-coming.'

The groom, it should be mentioned, was Richard, whom Matthew

had taken into his service, at the time when Mrs. Parlbys own servant was pronounced to be capable of resuming work again.

Richard's hat was worn very much on one side, and with a forward inclination, perhaps intended to keep the sun from his eyes. When he took his seat by the side of his master, he folded his arms and thrust his legs out rigidly. Trying hard in every respect to look very much like a groom indeed, he did this only in honour of his master; and if on the road some rustic youth of the place ventured to twist his mouth into an expression of derision at the appearance of the new groom, the latter never failed to convey by a glance of his eye a stern promise to the rustic youth that he would inevitably 'wait on him'; in other words, that he would seek an opportunity of punching his sarcastic critic's head in a manner that the latter would not readily forget.

'In speaking of that gentleman you will please to call him Mr. Maybright, Richard,' said Matthew, in reference to the parson, who was hoisting signals that he wished to speak with the ship about to weigh anchor.

'I have got a letter from the great man,' said the parson.

'Instructions for me?'

'Yes.'

It occurred to Matthew then, as it had occurred to him several times before, that the squire, who was the great man referred to, never sent his instructions direct to his agent, but always through Mr. Maybright. It would seem that the latter was thus notified that he was held responsible for the doings of the man he had recommended for the management of affairs at Thatchley.

'He says,' continued the parson, 'that he is beginning to get sick and tired of what he is pleased to call the fuss people are making about the restoration of our old church.'

'Oh!'

'He says he won't give a penny more than the hundred pounds he has promised, and that he half regrets having promised anything at all; he goes on, however, to say that, in addition to giving the hundred pounds, he will relieve us of the expense of an architect.'

'Well, that will cost him something more than a trifle.'

'He does not propose to call in the aid of an architect in practice.'

'An amateur, eh?'

'No, he thinks that as you are an architect you could take us in hand.'

'Ah-ha!'

'Could you?—I mean, of course, have you time? You were to be allowed to take other agencies if you could get them, and you must not undertake this matter if it will in any way interfere with your own prospects.'

'I should never think of my own prospects in a case where I was called to lend a hand in anything in which you were interested.'

'My dear boy, don't make any mistake on that head,' said the

parson; 'I have lent a hand myself in the matter, because people here and all round about have taken up the idea of restoring the old church, and seem to be so set on carrying out their idea; and because I don't like to throw cold water on what so many people appear to desire. But, as far as I am concerned, the restoration has no interest for me.'

'You are satisfied with the old building as it is?'

'Quite. It is always kept clean, and it is in very good repair; the reparations that have been made from time to time are not beautiful, certainly—I suppose, in fact, they have been made in utter ignorance of the architecture of the edifice, and are in the eyes of some people absolutely hideous; but, to my thinking, time has given them a mellowness that to me is positively—in short—well, to tell you the truth, as long as the old place is water-tight and clean, I would rather they would drop all this talk about restoring it.'

'That's just how I feel.'

'But other people don't feel like that. Gurgoyle is gone almost mad in his fervour for restoration.'

'I have no doubt,' said Matthew, 'he will answer for the salvation of all the souls in the parish if they have a pretty church to go to.'

'The question is, can you act on the squire's suggestion?'

'I am not so busy just now as I was,' replied Matthew; 'but I could not do what I am doing now with efficiency if, in addition to my present duties, I were to attempt taking all the measurements and preparing all the plans and specifications necessary for the complete restoration of a church like that.'

'The squire has provided against that being the case. He says you can hire a draughtsman to assist you if you are too much occupied to do it all yourself. What he wants is to avoid the expense of employing an architect in practice like Mr. Chamfer.'

'I could do it in that way, perhaps,' said Matthew. 'I will think about it, and see you to-night. How does the subscription list stand, sir?'

'Pretty well. The squire is only down for a hundred pounds; and, to tell you the truth,' said the parson, dropping his voice, 'I don't think we should have got him to promise that, only as the owner of the property about here he couldn't give much less, considering what other people are promising. Why, there's poor Hicks has actually insisted on being put down for a thousand, and that's the man they say is likely to be put into an asylum!'

'Well, sir, I suppose if a commission in lunacy were issued against him, such an act of generosity would be bad evidence against him?'

'Ha, ha!—Well, you will come in to-night.'

Driving along, Matthew did think over the matter. The result of his thinking was that his friend Jack Gurgoyle should be the man to assist him in the restoration. Jack was a clever Gothic draughtsman, and he should have all the benefit of his, Matthew's, exacter

learning, and Jack should have all the credit of the thing, and should thus lay the foundation of a practice of his own, and Jack should thus, also, have an opportunity of paying his court to Pattie.

He settled it all with the parson in the evening, and the next day wrote to Jack himself, asking him if the plan would suit him.

Jack replied emphatically by the next post that the plan would suit him; adding that, just previous to the proposal being made to him, he had conceived the idea of getting Matthew to invite him down to Thatchley in the approaching holidays, in order that that period of leisure in his laborious life might be made beatific by proximity to the only woman who had ever been able to turn his idealising thoughts from the beauty of inanimate art to beauty in the flesh. The influence she had gained over his art-lit soul was, he said, a great thing for him; but it might be even greater for her. She might come to be regarded in history as having saved a great soul from degradation, as having inspired that soul with the conception of some peerless structure; in comparison with the stupendous magnitude and dream-like beauty of which the mightiest monuments of art at present known to the human mind would seem as nothing. Her name might in the centuries to come be linked with his as Laura's was with Petrarch's, and as that of Beatrice was with Dante's. His letter ended thus:—

‘My boy, you have at one stroke opened to me the path of a Michael Angelo and the path to Pattie. In the same breath you proffer me fame and love. With those precious gifts you conjoin friendship—divine friendship—friendship personified in yourself, holding out to me the flowing bowl and the tranquillising pipe over your own hearth.’

Dwelling on these lofty utterances, and knowing them to have been penned in all seriousness by the writer, Matthew smiled grimly; not in derision of his friend, but because he saw too humiliating a resemblance between this rhapsody and those high-flown meditations and resolutions of his own, ending, like Jack's letter, in a bathos of brandy and tobacco.

‘But as to personifying friendship over my own hearth,’ he said to himself, ‘I am afraid, my dear Jack, by that you mean sitting up here drinking and smoking into the small hours of the morning.’

Now he felt his present solitude very much, and he always took pleasure in Jack's society; but rhapsodies on art in an atmosphere of beer and smoke from morning to night without cessation, and to the sacrifice of every single hour of his own leisure, would be much more unendurable than the dullness of solitude. Accordingly he did not fail to inform Jack that he had secured lodgings for him, thereby apprising him beforehand that their habitations would not be under the same roof.



## CHAPTER XXII.

NOT many days elapsed before Jack presented himself at Thatchley; and he lost no time in entering upon the path of fame, which, as he remarked to Matthew, over a glass of grog at about one o'clock of the night of his arrival, lay through the portals of the village church; neither did he lose a moment in taking those other steps which, as he also remarked to Matthew on a subsequent occasion at a similar hour of the night, were to end in making Pattie in the memory of future ages, the Laura of his life.

'But look here, old fellow,' he suddenly observed to Matthew one day, when both were looking at the church together, 'when, on the day of my arrival here I went straight off—I will not say, to call on Mrs. Parlbys herself simply—but in the hope that by a glimpse of the divinity hovering round her I should get an instant inspiration for the great work that the restoration of this ancient fabric puts before me—'

'Don't venture on too high a flight here, Jack; for if you suffer a lapse there is no grog at hand to give you a lift.'

'I pass by your sarcasm, sir, with the loftiness that is a part of my nature, and I proceed. On the occasion mentioned you declined to accompany me, on the score that you had a pressing engagement at some neighbouring market town.'

'Quite true,' observed Matthew.

'And on every subsequent occasion of my calling on you in the evening, stirred in my deepest feelings by the hope that you would once again join me in plunging into that society wherein we formerly delighted together, I have invariably found your gig at the door under the guardianship of that transformation from dirtiness to splendour who used to be called Richard, but whom I heard yesterday addressed by the grocer as Mr. Spike. You smile, my friend, but I did. Well, continuing my remarks, which seem to be expanding, whenever, in spite of the ominous portent of the gig, I have still ventured to invite you to accompany me to our admirable friend, Mrs. Parlbys, you have invariably answered me by saying that you had business of particular importance to attend to—always in the same market town.'

'Well, don't you believe me, Jack?'

'I don't wish to question your veracity, but I do question your good taste in dropping those acquaintances of former days.'

'Well, well, I will call on Mrs. Parlbys one of these days.'

'Well, let it be this particular one of these days—this very day. To tell you the truth, Mat, Mrs. Parlbys is rather hurt by your apparent intention to cut her; and she sends you a message through me that you are to go with me to her house this evening. She is afraid you're overdoing yourself with work.'

'She's very kind to think about me.'

'Well, say you will go.'

'All right, I'll go. But, look, here comes your cousin.'

And turning round, Jack saw the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyne approaching.

'If he begins trying to improve the occasion at my expense,' hastily observed Jack, 'let us make an excuse for giving him the slip at once. It's too much to expect that I am to submit to be lectured on religion by a man younger than myself. As though my art did not afford abundant signs of the very highest religious feeling existing within me!'

'Well, gentlemen,' said the young clergyman mournfully, 'has any idea struck you as to how to do the chancel?'

Matthew looked towards Jack as if to imply that it was in that direction that information must be looked for.

'Not an idea merely,' replied Jack, 'but a whole vision appears before me—a thing of such exquisite airiness, so replete with purity, that the very sight of that alone in the church will fill the worshipper's soul with religious rapture.'

'The architecture of a church is not intended,' remarked the young clergyman, with a reproving shake of the head; 'and in this instance I do not apprehend that it will be able, to divert the thoughts of the worshipper from the real object of his presence; it is intended simply to gracefully, but at the same time unostentatiously, afford shelter for the majestic celebration of those solemn rites and ceremonies on which alone the thoughts of the devotee ought to be centred.'

'The architecture of a church,' replied Jack, with a ring of combativeness in his voice, 'is expressly intended to enchain the attention of the beholder, and should be such as to lift his soul in rapturous devotion high above the somewhat disturbing influence of any official engaged in merely subordinate ceremony.'

The youthful and reverend Gregory Gurgoyne again shook his head in fatherly reproof.

'But come, Mat,' said Jack, 'I want to give you some notion of the design I have got in my head in a rough sketch. For that I want the inspiration of a pot of that stunning ale of yours; so come along, while we have the whole afternoon before us.'

'Mr. Gurgoyne,' spoke the young clergyman, 'I am bound by my priestly office to solemnly warn you that the task you have in hand should not be entered upon with aid from the fumes of strong liquors.'

'Look here, Bob!' cried Jack.

The Reverend Robert Gregory Gurgoyne had a strong aversion to his first name, and always wrote himself 'Gregory Gurgoyne' simply.

'Look here, Bob!' cried Jack, 'don't you try to lecture me. I'm as much a preacher of religion as you are. I preach it through my art, and I don't think my preaching at all inferior to yours. Ta-ta, Bob.'

With that he walked off with Matthew.

'This growing love of architecture in religion which we have been fostering so zealously,' thought the young and reverend Gregory Gurgyle, who had been one of the most active spirits in promoting the idea of restoring Thatchley Church, 'is perhaps, after all, becoming somewhat too enthusiastic. I must take care that it enters not too deeply into the hearts of my people. Their thoughts must be sustained in the right direction, and therefore I must overcome Mr. Maybright's indifference, and insist on those candles and processions.'

---

### CHAPTER XXIII.

MATTHEW went that evening with his friend Jack to call at Mrs. Parlby's. The visit proved not more satisfactory than he had anticipated. Pattie's behaviour with him was shy and silent; Kate's, polite but frigid. He was only saved from embarrassment by Mrs. Parlby herself, who, having scolded him for his unneighbourly neglect of her, did her best to make up for what was to her inexplicable coldness on the part of the other members of her household in receiving the young man who had taken so much interest in her dear Lenny.

'You must really try in future, Mr. Bernock, to give us a little more of your company,' she said, at a moment when Jack and the two girls had gone out into the garden. 'It is all very well for an old woman like me to live in this seclusion, but the girls, I know, suffer from the want of society. I know Kate does.'

He was not quite sure that Mrs. Parlby did know this, but he was quite sure that the kind-hearted lady knew his secret, and that her remarks were intended to convey to him with very little disguise the assurance that she would stand his friend.

'You are very kind, Mrs. Parlby,' he said, 'to welcome me; but it seems to me that Thatchley is not wholly destitute of society of some kind.'

'Yes; but it is so different from what the girls were once accustomed to.'

Matthew thought of Richard's father, of Grog-blossom, and of other similar spirits who had been wont to haunt the bar of the 'Golden Sheaf,' and he thought that certain of the inhabitants of Thatchley and its neighbourhood would assuredly be quite willing to admit that their society was different from that of those practised toppers. Mrs. Parlby clearly must be referring to a period anterior to the time when he had first made the girls' acquaintance.

Then his thoughts went back to the obscure allusion poor old Harkles had one night made as to the trouble Pattie's mother had brought upon him, and Matthew wondered what it was, and what Pattie's earlier life had been. He reflected too on those unmistak-

able signs of good-breeding in Kate which he had so often before reflected on. Ruminating thus, he remained silent for a time, and before he could make up his mind to venture on some remark to Mrs. Parlby, designed to keep the conversation turned on a subject so interesting to him, Kate came back from the garden—but unaccompanied by the others.

Presently Mrs. Parlby was summoned to the kitchen by a maid-servant, who desired the benefit of her mistress's advice on some affair of the household; and Matthew was left alone with Kate. Desirous of relieving her as well as himself of the embarrassment threatened by this situation, he rose to go.

'I think I will wish you good night,' he said.

She laid a book she held in her hand on the table, but did not turn towards him, or lift her eyes.

'Won't you wait till Mrs. Parlby comes back?' she asked.

'I think not. Perhaps you will be kind enough to make my excuses to her for me. There is a little matter of business awaiting my attention at home.'

'But won't you wait for your friend Mr. Gurgoyle? He will be going himself in a few minutes.'

He looked at her searchingly, wondering whether it could possibly be that she wished him to stop on her own account.

'Why *should* I wait, when—when—' he began.

'Merely to say good night to Mrs. Parlby, and to have the benefit of your friend's company: the road always seems a lonely one to me at night.'

'Why should this go on?' he said suddenly. 'You must know—there ought not to be any doubt in your heart that I love you. Will you not let me give an explanation of that unfortunate affair?'

'Mr. Bernock, I have already twice given you an answer to that question. The answer I should give now would be—must be—the same as before.'

'Then,' said he, 'I will wait for your permission no longer. I will give the explanation now without your consent. I ought to have insisted on doing so before.'

At this she got up and moved towards the open casement with the plain intention of joining Pattie in the garden.

'You are determined, then, to avoid hearing what I have to say?' he said. 'Suppose I produce positive proof in support of my explanation?'

'You *could* not produce positive proof, Mr. Bernock.'

So saying she went out by the open casement. She had said these words without anger and without heat; there was nothing but gentleness and sorrow in her voice.

Without attracting the attention of those in the garden, Matthew quietly let himself out into the street. He was pleased to think that Jack had reached the point of making his society agreeable to Pattie,

and as regards those two he looked forward with pleasure. As for himself, he felt that his doom had been pronounced.

'No doubt she is right,' he thought, as he walked along the lonely street; 'I could *not* produce positive proof. I certainly did write the offer of marriage to her before that interview which Chamfer and Stopp interrupted, and Richard was present in my room when I wrote it, and must have seen me writing it. But how could he assert that that was the letter I gave him *after* the interview? If I had sent him with it before the interview, it would be different. No, she is right, I can *not* produce positive proof.'

And with this conviction he entered his own house. The old room seemed to him gloomy and cheerless. Yet it was easy for him—painfully easy—to imagine how bright the old wainscotings, and how airy the heavy ceilings would have appeared if—well, as he said to himself, 'if things had been different.' To make them look less gloomy and less cheerless now, and to give a little brightness and airiness to his own thoughts, he brought out a decanter, some water, a glass, and a box of cigars. These were the only 'little matters of business' that seemed after all to be 'awaiting him at home.'

---

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

'WHY, Jack,' said Matthew, calling on his friend several days after the evening spoken of in the previous chapter, and finding him hard at work on drawings for the church, 'you're getting on like a house a-fire! The work grows under your hands.'

'Yes, I have been to bed sober for several nights running now. Think of that, my boy! What would Pistol and Bardolph and our other boon companions up in London town say if they heard that said of Jack Gurgoyle!'

'And you feel twice the man you do when you're drinking, eh, Jack? Well, I hope the old idea of seeking inspiration in art from the bottle—'

'Oh, lor!' cried Jack, 'what rubbish a man does talk when his nerve fluids are set coursing in him with a little alcohol!'

It did not escape Matthew that his friend's eyes showed a change; they were well open, the whites clear and the pupils bright and liquid. His cheeks were less puffed, and there was a softening-down in the tint of the nostrils. His hand, too, was steady, and the tone of his voice subdued.

'You don't miss Pistol and Bardolph and company, then, eh, Jack?'

'Miss them!—why should I?—they're all very good fellows in their way; but what can one think of asses who stupefy themselves with drink every night of their lives?'

Matthew, knowing of Jack's new-found source of pleasure in

Mrs. Parlbys house, was not surprised to find that his friend at length showed signs of living a more cleanly life; nor, being somewhat acquainted with the peculiarities of reformed sinners, was he very much surprised to hear his friend's unmerciful allusion to his ancient companions—not much, but yet, a little; for he never would have predicted the discovery of this mark of small natures in Jack.

'Well, Jack,' said Matthew, 'in any case I am glad there has been thrown in your way a harmless amusement for your leisure hours—I mean in the shape of your intercourse with Mrs. Parlbys and—her household.'

'He calls my intercourse with the girl I love—a girl,' cried Jack, with something of his old grandiloquent tone, but still less boisterously than in former days—'a girl for the honour of whose smile in the days of chivalry nations would have contended and thrones would have—'

'Tattered!—go on, Jack, *I'm a-listenin'*.'

'He degrades my chivalrous suit for the love of such a woman with the name of a *harmless amusement for my leisure hours*.'

'No, Jack; but a mere matter of harmless amusement for leisure hours is no such small affair as you seem to think it. It is a matter of the highest national importance!'

'Go on, Mat, now it's I who am listening. It is your turn for oratory now.'

'Look here, Jack! this matter which you seem to regard as of such small moment—the matter of harmless amusement for leisure hours—is the great cure for drunkenness, which the philanthropists of this country are so busily searching after—at least the principal cure!'

'Why, Jack!—and was it you who were destined to make this great discovery! Henceforward, then, your name will rank with that of Columbus and of Watt and of Stephenson!'

'America was known by Europeans before the days of Columbus, Jack, and steam before the days of Watt, and the principle of a level railway before the days of Stephenson. What they did with the knowledge they found was to extend it, to insist on it, and to act on it.'

'And so, the knowledge at present existing as to this great principal cure of drunkenness has to be extended, to be insisted on, and to be acted on—eh, Mat?'

'Exactly.'

'And do you propose to be the great one to extend it, to insist on it, and to act on it, Mat?'

'At least I will do so in regard to yourself, if you like, Jack.'

'All right, my boy.'

'I was reading the other day, Jack, a discourse by an eminent churchman. He is a high dignitary, of great piety and learning, needing to go only one step higher to become the earthly head of

his church; and, therefore, he speaks with the mouth of authority. He is discoursing on the evil of intemperance in drinking, and he appeals to his hearers in—if I remember rightly—these words, “In the name of God, I ask all of you to stand against this evil. If you have got the love and the taste of drink on your mouth, it will dog you and hound you all through life, and your only safety is, renounce drink altogether!”

‘Unexceptionable words—eh, Mat?’

‘He is speaking, mind you,’ continued Mat, ‘of a weakness manifested by, probably, the majority of the adult inhabitants of this country. Is the eminent ecclesiastic aware that the greater number of this majority are not afflicted with “the love and taste of drink on their mouth,” and that their intemperance is due solely to their want of a better amusement for their hours of leisure?’

‘A-ha!—now we are coming to it!’

‘As to what are called the upper classes in this country,’ resumed Mat, ‘hard drinking among them has, if I know anything about the matter, ceased to be the fashion. Their wealth has easily enabled them to supply the place of that fashion with abundant pleasures, not only of a less injurious, but even of a beneficial nature. Temperance in drinking ought with them to be an easy virtue. But how about what we generally refer to as the working classes, and the class immediately above them, comprising such persons as clerks and others employed in the lower grades of that division of us which may be said to work rather with its head than with its hands?’

‘Yes, my lords and gentlemen!’ cried Jack, with an oratorical flourish of the hand; ‘how about those other poor devils—the ploughman and the coal-heaver, the bricklayer and the cotton-spinner, the quill-driver and the counter-skipper?—all those lowly ones of the rank and file whom your iron heel would—’

‘You ought to know something of the British workman, Jack,’ pursued Matthew. ‘Well, take the case of a man of his class. We need not select one of the poorest of the class; let us hit on a mechanic for example, in the receipt of fair wages. Suppose him to have a turn for gardening, or for some other out-door recreation, and suppose him to have a garden or the other means requisite for the indulgence of his bent. Is our climate such that he is likely to be able to amuse himself with his favourite pursuit all the year round? Granted even that in favourable weather he experiences no monotony in that pursuit, that the pursuit when its practice is possible maintains its interest for him, what is to be his amusement in unfavourable weather, in the dreary months of our long winter? Whether his family be large or small, his habitation is probably cramped in extent and unattractive in situation. His floors are not softly carpeted, nor are his walls hung with beautiful paintings and engravings. He has no well-stocked library, no well-furnished billiard-room, no cosy smoking-room, probably no retreat at all where he can escape for a quiet hour or so from the noisy crying

and prattling of his children. He is not soothed with the tenderness of graceful and refined women, nor are his behests waited for and promptly obeyed by a body of trained servants. I won't add to this list of absent things his inability to give grand dinner-parties or magnificent balls; because balls and dinner-parties may, as a rule, I suppose, be reckoned among the burdens, rather than among the pleasures of life.'

'Oh—ho!' cried Jack.

'But I shall certainly add to the mechanic's list of absent things the power, if not of appreciating, at least of maintaining constant intercourse with friends of large knowledge and trained force of reasoning. You may say, that though all these things are absent, the British workman has still at his command, certain other pleasures which he can more easily appreciate, and which he ought to take pains to develop and maintain. Of course he has, and of course he ought. But, with some, perhaps with numerous exceptions, he does not do as he ought. As a rule, he perceives chiefly this: that his rooms are cramped and ill-lighted, that his children are boisterous and noisy, that his wife, if not slatternly, is not over-given to make herself attractive, that there is no conversation to engage him, and that, on the whole, after a hard day's toil, his home is not so entertaining even as the workshop. Perceiving all this, and not being very sharply pricked by any keen sense of duty, he drifts off to the public-house, where he is sure of enjoying abundance of cheerful, not to say resplendent light, conversation, which though not choice, is such as a full-grown British workman can interest himself in, and, above all, the exhilarating effects of a "drain of something." Does he do this because "the love and taste of drink is on his mouth"? Not in more than five cases out of fifty. In the other forty-five cases, he goes to the public-house, because of his want of a *harmless amusement for his leisure hours*. You see this matter of occupying the leisure hours is not so small an affair as you were disposed to think it.'

'Now he's pushing me into a corner,' remarked Jack. 'Presently I shall have to go down on my knees.'

'Again, take the case of a young city clerk. Suppose him to be one of that very numerous class which is recruited from the country. He probably at first lives in one small, uninviting chamber, and out of his place of business, knows hardly a soul in the town. Where, in nine cases out of ten—for I wish to allow for those more fortunate ones who make their entry into town life under less perilous circumstances, and for those who, whether more fortunately situated or not, are more strongly endowed with patience and prudence—where, in nine cases out of ten, does the young clerk newly started in the city invariably drift to? To the billiard-room, of course; and that means the public-house bar. Why does he drift there? Because *he* has got "the love and taste of drink on his mouth"? No, simply because the billiard-table and its appurtenance, the drinking-bar,



present to him the readiest means of amusement for his leisure hours.'

'True, O great Discoverer ! and sad as true !' exclaimed Jack. 'But why cloud my mind with dark despair, by thus gloomily painting the lives and fates of half my fellow-countrymen, if you are not prepared to point me out one ray of hope, that for all this there may be found a remedy ?'

'When the friends of a youth,' continued Matthew, 'have found him a stool in a counting-house, or a bench in a carpenter's shop, they rejoice to think that they have furnished him with the great need of his life. They have furnished him with the means of earning his living. They have supplied him with a trade. But they have not furnished him with amusement. Supplying him with work, has been a matter of care and solicitude ; what form of amusement he adopts is left to chance, and chance with him usually leads to the public-house. If people wish to do away with a large amount of drunkenness in this country, *they must find a substitute for it*. They must both collectively and individually treat with much more solicitude, and much more method, the subject of amusement than they have ever hitherto done.'

'Well, but reading-rooms and public libraries, parks and gardens, temperance halls, coffee public-houses, and coffee palaces, have already been provided for the public,' observed Jack.

'Yes, and a great many more will have to be provided.'

'But it is not so much what corporations and committees can do that has to be promoted, as what the individual should be taught to do. He should be taught that amusement is not a matter of small consequence, or one that should occupy his thoughts as little as possible ; and he should be reminded that, however much we may be accustomed to depreciate its importance, nevertheless, a great part of our lives is given up to it. In fine, it ought to be clearly recognised that amusement is a matter of high moment, and that it ought not to be relegated to chance as it so frequently is. In the so-called public schools, where the aristocratic and wealthy classes receive their early education, amusement is by no means a matter left to chance : it is carefully arranged and provided for, and forms a part of the school organisation. A young man, who has to earn his living, sees for himself the danger of not early taking thought for the future in finding a means of livelihood : it should be impressed upon him, that it is equally dangerous not to take thought for his amusement in the future.'

'I thought he usually showed a very great readiness in taking thought upon that subject,' remarked Jack.

'Yes, but I am speaking of that period of his life when his permanent habits of amusement have not been formed. It is then that he should be taught to look forward and to form his plans with regard to amusement as far as it lies in his power to do so. As a general rule, at the present time, he does nothing of the kind. He

never considers his future line of amusement as one of the questions of his life. He leaves all that to chance, and chance, as I say, usually leads him to the public-house. He should be told that he must not leave his amusement to chance. Don't simply tell him to go to church and Sunday school regularly, to show devotion to his Bible-class, to say his prayers without missing, and go to bed every night at ten o'clock, and then think that, having told him all that, and furnished him with the means of earning his living, you have done all that is necessary. You must tell him that he will find amusement one of the great necessities of his life, and that if he leaves the supplying of that necessity to chance, he is putting his whole future in peril. Teach him that not only is amusement an absolute need in life, but that its pursuit must be entered into with the same deliberation and circumspection that are shown in seeking for the means of putting bread into one's mouth.'

'Well, Mat,' said Jack, 'with regard to your knowledge, you have now extended it, and insisted on it. Are you going to act on it?'

'I will tell you what I am going to do. I am going to arrive as near living a life of temperance as I possibly can. And you, Jack?'

'I?—oh, certainly. Why shouldn't I?'

'Exactly. Why shouldn't you? You are now provided with—'

'A harmless amusement for my leisure hours—eh?'

But Matthew, in the dulness of his own house that night, reflected that he himself was not so provided; and so to while away the evening, he thought he would pay one more—just one more—visit to the 'Boar's Head.'

In the course of time he began to wonder whether to sit and drink with the young lawyer, and the timber merchant, and the draper with five shop-fronts, and the retired captain, and the sporting doctor, and the rest of that fraternity, and to be appealed to as an unassailable arbitrator on all questions in politics, in philosophy, and in literature generally, was after all to be at once his amusement for leisure hours and the crowning glory of his life.

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

ONE morning the parson ran up to him. 'Great news!' he cried out, with a mock air of having something momentous to impart. 'Great news!'

'Indeed!' said Matthew.

'Yes, the squire is coming down.'

'Ah! When?'

'To-night.'

'Where will he stay—with the house all torn to pieces?'

'At the Home Farm,' replied the parson. 'Don't you know, before the alterations were begun, he had rooms prepared for his use at the farm?'

'Well, sir, I suppose it will be my duty to present myself before the great man to-night. Will it be proper for me to meet him at the station at Carborough, or at the farm?'

'Don't trouble to do either. He says a carriage is to be sent for him; and makes a particular point of this—you know already, from previous remarks of mine, the kind of man you will have to encounter—he makes a special point of this, that he doesn't want to be bothered with seeing any one; that's a hint to me also.'

'Well, then, I suppose I ought to keep in the background until his grandeur issues a command for me to appear before him?'

'No, to-morrow it will be all hands on deck, I suppose, and you had better get an interview with him early in the morning, before he is bothered, as he calls it, by other people. Go down to the farm just when he is finishing his breakfast. I will be ready to go with you and introduce you.'

'You are very kind, sir.'

'I suppose Mr. Chamfer and his first lieutenant—what do they call him?'

'Mr. Stopp.'

'I suppose they will be down to-morrow—probably they will come down to-night and sleep at the 'Boar's Head' at Carborough. You see the architectural business relating to the house is still in their hands; and I have noticed that they always come down on the rare occasions when the squire pays us a visit. Do they know that you are here?'

'Upon my word I don't know,' replied Matthew.

In the course of the day he saw Jack.

'Jack,' he said, 'the squire is coming down to-night; and whom else do you think we are to expect?'

'His wife?'

'No, he hasn't got one. Mr. Maybright says he thinks Chamfer and Stopp will turn up to-morrow. Do they know that I am here? Very odd I never asked you that before.'

'I don't think they do,' said Jack. 'I never told them, because I thought it would be best for you to have time to get established in your place before they heard news that would cause them to instantly set about trying to influence the squire's mind against you. I left them in ignorance of my own engagement down here from a similar reflection with regard to myself. Showed uncommon prudence there for me; didn't I, Mat?'

'You certainly did show prudence, Jack.'

'Won't they be thunderstruck!' exclaimed Jack, 'when they find that it is to Jack Gurgoyle, artist by inborn gifts, and Gothic artist by the learned labour and practice of years, and not to Chamfer and Stopp, candle-box makers by nature, and botchers of art by

practice, that the British public look for the restoration of one of the national monuments of our country ?'

Jack had for some time shown signs of having arrived at the conviction that the restoration of Thatchley Church was a national undertaking, and that the choice of himself as architect was due to a national recognition of his talents.

'Get me introduced to the squire as soon as you can, Mat,' he added ; 'and then if I get the opportunity, I will give Chamfer and Stopp such a setting down as will erase their names from the roll of art for ever and for ever.'

'Leave them alone, Jack ; pursue your own career, and let them pursue theirs. We will compare yours and theirs later.'

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE next morning a note came from the parson, saying he was confined to his room by a sharp attack of sore throat ; and so Matthew presented himself at the Home Farm, where the squire was temporarily lodged, alone.

A maid-servant opened the door to him, and told him that the squire was not in the house, but was smoking a cigar in the garden.

'I wouldn't disturb him, sir, if I was you, until he comes indoors,' said the girl, who had seen and spoken to Matthew at the farm frequently before, 'because his valet says he's in an awful temper this morning.'

Matthew said he would wait, and was shown into a small room near the front door. There he found also waiting Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp.

These two gentlemen stared with astonishment, and manifested an air of being scandalised by his presence in that room. Matthew seated himself with his face full in front of them, but without recognising them by his look. At length Mr. Chamfer, with twitching lips, and with a glance at his companion, as if to assure himself of protection being at hand, in the event of physical violence being called forth by the verbal assault he was about to make, said to Matthew,—

'And pray, what brings you here ?'

Matthew regarded his interrogator with a look of contemplation, which seemed to induce a feeling of restiveness on the part of Mr. Chamfer.

'You are come to look for employment under Mr. Vasper, I suppose ?' continued the eminent London architect.

Then, growing still more restive under Matthew's continued contemplation of him, he turned to Mr. Stopp and observed,—

'He has experienced to his cost the effects of my disapprobation

in London, and so, I suppose, he is come down on a tramp through the country. It's rather impudent, though, to take advantage of his knowledge of the name of one of my clients to ask for work here.'

A man-servant entered the room at this point, and imparted to Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp, as if confidentially, the information that the squire was approaching—was, in fact, about to come indoors.

'Give him my card at once,' Simpson, will you,' said Mr. Chamfer; 'and tell him I have been waiting all this time.'

Then through the open door Mr. Simpson was heard to say to some one entering the little hall,—

'Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp, sir; they seem rather—'

'Rather what?' drawled a soft, clear voice.

'Rather—rather—they said, sir,' stammered Mr. Simpson, 'or they gave me to understand, sir, that they were rather pressed for time.'

'Did they? Well, you can give them to understand that I don't care whether they're pressed or not—damn 'em; and you can also give them to understand, if you like, that they're a couple of cursed bunglers.'

Mr. Chamfer's face turned somewhat paler than usual, and Mr. Stopp's heavy lips parted with sudden consternation. Matthew had heard the words as distinctly as they had, and they regarded him with the looks of men who would be understood to say that his participation in the dreadful knowledge, though involuntary on his part, entailed—woe for him!—a terrible expiation. Nevertheless, the serenity of Matthew's face remained unclouded.

'You can also give them to understand,' continued the soft, clear voice, 'that I have got an agent here who can lick their heads off at architecture. They'll be hanging about here, I suppose, for the next few days, so I shall have plenty of opportunity of seeing them when I want to.'

With that the speaker was heard to walk to another part of the house, while Mr. Simpson returned, and said, in subdued tones, to Mr. Chamfer and his chief clerk,—

'Mr. Vasper is very sorry, sir,' with a bow to both, 'but he's too much engaged to see you at present.'

This courteous rendering of the message by Mr. Simpson was due to a certain gilding of the palm in which Mr. Chamfer and his chief clerk had found it occasionally expedient to indulge the great man's valet.

'Do you wish to see Mr. Vasper, sir,' he asked, turning to Matthew. 'I am afraid, sir, it's no use.'

'You can just say, if you please, that his agent, Mr. Bernock, is here,' said Matthew.

At this direction Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp looked as if they had received their finishing stroke, and could not conceal it. They

regarded Matthew with a curious expression of hate and fear. Mr. Simpson himself greeted the announcement with a stiffened countenance, and in going to deliver his message, emitted a short dry cough, defiant of everything in the nature of an agent.

He apparently met the squire as the latter was again in the act of crossing the little hall to go out once more.

'Mr. Bernock, sir,' he was heard to begin.

'Oh, the agent fellow!' the soft, clear voice returned. 'Tell him to go to h—, and not to bother me until I send for him.'

Mr. Simpson re-entered with a brightened face.

'Mr. Vasper says when he wants you he'll send for you,' he said to Matthew, with brevity.

Triumphant smiles showed that the outraged feelings of Mr. Chamfer and his chief clerk were solaced; and those two gentlemen remained behind to whisper in Mr. Simpson's ear certain facts concerning Matthew which they deemed it proper should be privately, and as speedily as possible, submitted to Mr. Vasper's consideration.

Matthew himself retired, debating within himself the question of resigning the agency of the Thatchley estates.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

HE was sitting at work the next morning in a large old room, which he called his business room, when Jack Gurgoyne burst in upon him with a face marked by mental perturbation of some kind.

'Mat,' he cried, 'the hour is come, and if you are my friend, the man also!'

'What's the matter, Jack?'

'This is the hour, and this,' he added, slapping himself on the chest, 'is the man!'

'For what, Jack?'

'For an event, a turning point, a crisis in the architecture of the age!'

'Indeed!'

'Back me up, my boy, and this very hour I shall put my foot on the first rung of the ladder of fame—on the first rung, do I say? No; I ought rather to say that I shall go up a dozen of 'em at a bound, and in a few short weeks—weeks? no, days, hours, I mean!—in a few short hours England will know that a new light has dawned on her world of architecture!'

'This is glorious news, Jack. But elucidate, expand—no, don't expand any more, but explain.'

'I saw the girls in Mrs. Parlbys garden this morning as I was passing—I had gone that way just for a little walk, don't you know?—and they told me they were going to inspect my drawings for the restoration—that is, such of them as I have already finished; and

who do you think is going to show my drawings to them? Who but the squire?’

‘Mr. Vasper!’ exclaimed Matthew, ‘does the squire know the girls?’

‘Yes, yes, so it seems. Why not? Well, they’re coming to see the drawings.’

‘Do they know where the drawings are? Does Kate know that she has to come here, to my house, to see them?’

‘I don’t know; at all events I didn’t tell her, for fear she would break off the arrangement; for, don’t you know, old man, there seems to me to be a sort of cloud between you and her; at least, so it strikes me.’

‘I daresay—I daresay. No doubt it strikes you so, Jack.’

‘Well, when they come, give me a flaring introduction to the squire, hold me up to the light, old boy.’

‘Show the drawings yourself, Jack, when the visitors come. The glory is yours, not mine.’

‘By Jove! they’re coming now!’ called out Jack. ‘A whole army of ‘em!’

‘Where?’

‘At your own front door, man!—you can’t see them now from this window. There goes the knocker, and there goes the bell! There’s a dark-looking card—the squire, I suppose—and Pattie and Kate, and, hanging on to the rear, the miserable Chamfer and his satellite Stopp. What a setting-down the two latter are going to get!’

‘Mr. Vasper, sir,’ said a servant.

And there entered the man whom Matthew had seen with Kate at the ‘Golden Sheaf’; with Peevers outside the ‘Pilgrims’ Rest’; and whom he had last seen coming out under the arch of Somerset House—the man whose face had seemed to Matthew to wear a perpetual smile. This then was his master.

‘So you are the agent, are you?’ said the squire, with half-concealed insolence; and Matthew wondered that he had not recognised the soft, clear voice the day before.

The agent answered by a bow, which also greeted Mrs. Parlbly and the girls.

‘Let us have a look at the drawings you have got finished for the church,’ said the squire.

‘Mr. Gurgyle,’ replied Matthew, turning to that gentleman, ‘is the architect who has prepared them.’

The architect who had prepared them had already got them unrolled at the other end of the big old room, and thither the ladies, followed by Mr. Chamfer and his lieutenant, Mr. Stopp, proceeded.

‘By the way’ observed the squire to Matthew—and stopping behind at that part of the room where the latter had purposely remained in order to leave the drawings entirely to Mr. Gurgyle for explanation—‘just make a note that Mr. Chamfer or Mr. Stopp,

whichever of the two is supposed to be the architect for the Hall, for I'll be hanged if I know—and I don't think Chamfer, himself, knows—just make a note that their design for the big doorway is to be altered.'

This had been uttered loud enough to cause Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp to lift their eyes from Mr. Gurgoyle's drawings, which they had been peering at with looks expressive of a potent fear of seeing something too obviously above even their detraction.

'I beg pardon for interrupting,' tremulously remarked Mr. Chamfer to the squire, 'but I quite understood what you said about the entrance to the vestibule; and I have already made a note of it myself. It will therefore not be necessary for your clerk to trouble himself about it.'

'Their design is absolutely hideous,' continued the squire to Matthew. 'You can draw, I believe; just sketch out something that will furnish them with an idea. Mr. Chamfer, let Mr.—what's the name again?—ah, Bernock, have a look at your design, and he'll show you how to alter it.'

'I beg pardon,' again tremulously remarked Mr. Chamfer, 'but I must distinctly refuse to submit my designs to any one for correction.'

'You make certain designs for me, and I pay you for them; therefore they are mine to do as I choose with.'

'The house for which I make your designs to be carried out under my supervision is yours, but the drawings showing those designs belong, sir, to me.'

'In all fairness, and from every common-sense point of view, they are mine.'

'There is a question about that, sir, I believe,' whispered Matthew to the squire, distinctly enough to the latter, but too low for the others to hear.

'Well, make the note in any case, and when you have time, show them how to alter their design,' said the squire with distinctness.

Mr. Chamfer looked at Mr. Stopp as if invoking his championship.

'The serious, not to say grave, I may say—er—weighty, issue,' began Mr. Stopp, feeling his way to the enunciation of a great sentence if not of a great truth, 'involved in the important question which arises from the highly interesting discussion of a subject which—er—not unfrequently furnishes matter, if not for dispute, at least—er—for assertion and rejoinder; namely, whether the designs furnished by an architect for an edifice to be erected under his supervision and direction belong—er—on the one hand, to him, as the originator and creator of the idea manifested in the structure, or on the other hand, to the proprietor, as the owner of the erection in which the architect's invention is—as it were—in point of fact—er—so to express it, briefly in a manner to define it—er—worked out;—this—er—issue—er—question—er—matter under discussion, according as it may seem fit to describe it, is one which the judicial



ability, the legal acumen—er—the patient attention—er—in short, the highest talent of our courts of law—'

The constructor of this beginning of a sentence was cut short by the squire giving a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, and saying to Matthew,—

'Make a note of the alteration I desire to be made, and bear in mind that you are to entirely change their design.'

Mr. Chamfer having seen, not without pleasure, the failure of his assistant, whose oratory even he sometimes groaned under, now again made himself heard in tremulous accents as before, but nevertheless with the directness of a man conscious of knowing well what he had got to say.

'In any case, to whomsoever an architect's drawings may belong,' he remarked, 'I cannot, as a recognised architect in practice, submit to have my designs carried to another person for correction.'

'He is right,' whispered Matthew to the squire.

'Especially,' appended Mr. Stopp, who felt he was now not only called upon to assert himself before the company at large, but to rehabilitate himself in authority before Mr. Chamfer individually, 'especially—er—as that other person is—er—one who has never been in independent practice; who has never, in fact, acted in any but a subordinate position, never, in fact, in any other capacity than that of—er—clerk.'

'Make the note in your memorandum book, as I told you,' said the squire to Matthew.

At the other end of the room the voices of Mrs. Parlbly and the girls were heard speaking in admiration of Mr. Gurgoyle's handiwork—clearer, and, to Matthew, more melodious than the rest, the voice of Kate. His mind went back this bright summer's day in the country to the dark winter's day in London, when he had first seen her. It was on the evening of the day on which his uncle had died;—that dreary December morning, when sleeping in his clothes on a chair, he had been startled from his slumber by the sharp, double knock of the postman—and *that letter, sent back through the returned letter office—what had become of it?*

He remembered to have put it unopened into his coat-pocket—for returned letters were with his father frequent things in those days. At the same moment that his memory went back to all this, he put his hand inside the breast of his coat to take out his memorandum book, in obedience to the squire's request, and instead of the memorandum book, he brought forth the *returned letter*.

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE old room fronted northerly, and so never got the sun; and Matthew, feeling the morning air in it chilly after the great heat

of the previous day, had put on a warmer house coat to work in. It was the coat in which he had been roused from his sleep on the morning of his father's death.

He laid the letter on the table, and turned to the other coat which he had thrown off. Having made the note, he turned round again and saw the squire regarding with fixed eyes the address on the letter.

'Did you know the person to whom that letter is addressed?' asked the squire, in a low voice.

'Mr. Bagnall?—yes,' replied Matthew, putting the letter back in his pocket.

'It is a returned letter, which has never been opened.'

'Yes,' answered Matthew with a slight expression of surprise, 'the person to whom it is addressed was dead before it was returned to his house.'

'I know he is dead.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes, I saw a notice of the inquest in a London paper. May I ask how a letter of his happens to be in your possession?'

'I happen to be a relative of his.'

'You *are*, are you?'

'Yes.'

'You have never opened the letter, and apparently feel no interest in it. Have you any objection to humouring a fancy of mine, and giving it to me?'

'To you! Really—' began Matthew.

'I was acquainted with him, and I have a fancy for possessing a letter written in his hand-writing, especially one written just before his death.'

'Really,' began Matthew, again pondering over the squire's remark, with a mind labouring under a rush of painful recollections in connection with his father, 'I am afraid I can't yield to your request in this particular matter. As Richard Bagnall's heir—'

'His heir!—heir to what?'

'Well, to this letter for example,' replied Matthew, with a smile.

'Nevertheless, I ask you to humour my fancy by giving me the letter. Why not?—it is a harmless fancy. I have no serious interest in it.'

'Perhaps I have.'

'You think so? Why?'

'I have no very particular reason for thinking so; but whatever interest attaches to it—'

'You are determined not to humour my fancy?'

'In this matter I must beg to be excused from doing so.'

'Think twice about it before refusing me.'

'I have thought about it, and I must refuse your request, not, I assure you, from any feeling of perversity, or from any want of willingness to please you, but simply from a feeling of delicacy with

regard to what I must regard as a part of my relative's private correspondence.'

'Of course—of course, I understand. It's not of the slightest consequence—merely a whim of mine.'

But the smile, which was never agreeable, seemed to Matthew to grow suddenly more unpleasant than ever. The squire walked hastily across the room to where Mr. Gurgoyne was showing the drawings, and began turning them over. Mr. Chamfer and his chief draughtsman watched his countenance nervously, as if in fear of seeing it show signs of approbation.

'These designs won't do at all,' said the squire presently. 'I can't offer such nonsense as this to the Restoration Committee.'

Mr. Gurgoyne's face fell as much as Mr. Chamfer's and that of his friend brightened. Matthew, knowing the cause of the squire's sudden attack, looked on unmoved, waiting for something more venomous.

'In this case,' continued the squire, addressing himself to Matthew, 'I think Mr. Chamfer will have to revise *your* work. I find I have over-estimated your capabilities.'

'I have already stated,' said Matthew, 'that the merit of those drawings is not mine, but Mr. Gurgoyne's.'

'They have been prepared under your direction, as I understand,' rejoined the squire, 'and I tell you again you will have to get them revised by Mr. Chamfer.'

'But it would be such a pity to have such beautiful designs altered!' cried Kate, who was never backward in giving the world the benefit of her views. 'Don't you think so, aunt?'

'My dear,' replied Mrs. Parlbly, 'you know that, in my opinion, the simplest and the plainest pattern of building is the most fitting for a place of worship.'

'Oh, but now you are saying what you think you ought to say as a Methodist; won't you say what you think of these designs as designs?'

'Well, dear, I think them very beautiful.'

'And you, Pattie?' asked Kate.

'I think they are perfectly lovely,' murmured Pattie, with enthusiasm; 'I could gaze upon them for ever without feeling tired for one single moment.'

This expression of warm approval on the part of Pattie, Matthew precipitately interpreted as a sign of her having already begun to yield to the charm of Jack's energetic admiration of her.

'They may or may not be all that's admirable,' sneered the squire; 'but I desire that they should undergo Mr. Chamfer's revision, and Mr. Bernock will be good enough to see my request carried out.'

'I must object, with regard to my drawings, to their revision by another architect, as distinctly as Mr. Chamfer did with regard to his drawings,' spoke Mr. Gurgoyne vigorously.

'The cases are entirely different,' breathlessly rejoined Mr. Chamfer.

'Entirely so,' added Mr. Stopp. 'Wholly so; altogether so.'

'How?' inquired Mr. Gurgoyle.

'Mr. Chamfer,' observed Mr. Stopp to the company at large, 'is an architect in recognised practice, while these—er—attempts, as I may call them, to suggest a restoration, are the work of one who has, I imagine, been employed as a wholly irresponsible—er—clerk, remunerated by the hour or the week, or—'

'I will save this gentleman the trouble of calling further on his imagination,' interposed Matthew, addressing the squire, 'by stating the real facts concerning Mr. Gurgoyle's position in connection with these drawings, not as I imagine them to be, but as I know them to be.'

'Well?' said the squire.

'I engaged Mr. Gurgoyle on the understanding, as I believed myself to be empowered to do,' continued Matthew, 'that in any case he would be paid for the designs, and that probably he would be required by the Restoration Committee to see them carried out under his own direction. There can be no doubt, therefore, that in regard to these drawings he stands in precisely the same position as Mr. Chamfer does with regard to the designs for the Hall, namely, that of an architect acting with professional responsibility, and not that of a drawing-clerk acting under another person's professional direction.'

'I consider them to have been prepared under your direction,' rejoined the squire, 'and I request you to submit your designs to my architect, Mr. Chamfer, for his revision.'

'I give you my professional word, sir,' interposed Mr. Chamfer, 'that in the course you are pursuing you are acting in strict observance with the etiquette of my profession. Is not that according to your professional experience, Stopp?'

'The judicial ability, the—er—legal acumen, in short—er—the ripest learning of our courts of law,' began Mr. Stopp.

'Oh, hang the etiquette of your profession, and the what-d'ye-call-'ems of our courts of law!' interrupted the squire. 'Mr. Bernock, you will see that my orders with respect to submitting your drawings for the restoration to Mr. Chamfer are carried out.'

'No designs of mine shall be submitted to Mr. Chamfer's, or any other man's mutilation,' sang out Mr. Gurgoyle.

'I have nothing to do with this person,' observed the squire to Matthew; 'I simply expect you to carry out my orders.'

'When the Restoration Committee want to see these drawings,' spoke Mr. Gurgoyle, in his turn loftily seeming to ignore the existence of the squire, 'they will know where they can do so.'

And so saying he rolled the drawings under his arm and stalked out of the house with them.

'So this is the sort of people you introduce into my service,' smilingly observed the squire to Matthew.

'Wouldn't it be better, sir,' humbly interposed Mr. Chamfer,

'for me, instead of attempting to revise these ill-advised attempts at design, to prepare an entirely new set of drawings?'

'It would be better for you, no doubt,' replied the squire, 'in the sense that you would have a bigger bill to present to me or somebody; but whether it would be better on the whole, for the high interests of the church, or whatever else the phrase is—'

Mrs. Parlby interrupted with a hush of remonstrance as if terrified with a menace of profanity.

'I mean—' stammered Mr. Chamfer.

'I have told you what you mean,' broke in the squire. 'In any case the show is over.'

And, inviting Mrs. Parlby and the girls to follow, he walked out, Mr. Chamfer and the chief draughtsman keeping close to his heels.

'I shall certainly advise the committee to insist on the adoption of your design,' said Kate, in passing Matthew.

'You know,' observed Mrs. Parlby with a smile, 'that Kate has already obtained great influence over the chief members of the committee.'

'It would be a great pity, I am sure, if Mr. Gurgoyne's drawings were not followed,' said Pattie.

The calm look with which she regarded him in saying this, and her palpable insistence on the fact of Jack being the author of the designs, were instantly converted in Matthew's mind into additional proof that she was yielding to the ordinary course of things, and substituting a new idol for the old. He conducted the ladies to the outer door, where the squire, attended by Chamfer and Stopp, was awaiting them.

---

## CHAPTER XXIX.

'WHOSE turn-out is that?' inquired the squire, indicating a dog-cart waiting at the door with Richard at the horse's head.

'It belongs to you, sir,' replied Matthew.

'And for whose use is it there?'

'Mine.'

'Yours!'

'Yes. I want some sort of conveyance in conducting the business of your estates.'

'Well, just be good enough to dispense with a turn-out of that sort, and content yourself with a small pony-trap.'

'I doubt whether a pony would be equal to the work,' said Matthew; 'but that is a matter which will not henceforth concern me, as I shall not only dispense with this turn-out, but also with this house and all connected with it. It will hardly surprise you, sir, I think, to hear that I don't intend to remain in your service.'

The squire turned on his heel and walked off. Matthew went indoors, and writing a short letter, notifying his resignation of the

agency of the Thatchley estates, sent it off forthwith to the squire by the hands of Richard. It was of course highly gratifying to his pride to do this, but he did not conceal from himself the fact that his pride might have been equal to the endurance of even greater indignity than that to which he had been subjected, had it not occurred to his mind that he had two other agencies in addition to that of the Thatchley property.

'That, then, is the result of refusing to humour his whim about that unfortunate returned letter,' he soliloquised; 'and what *is* that letter, by the way—nothing more important than the ordinary run of returned letters my poor father used to receive, I suppose.'

He took it out, and laying it on the table before him, and tilting back his chair, fell to reflection. His mind naturally went back again to the morning of his father's death—the morning when that letter had arrived. Why should Vasper desire to possess a letter in Richard Bagnall's handwriting—above all, a letter written just previous to the unfortunate man's death? Matthew thought of the different times when he had seen Vasper before he knew the latter's name, and his identity with the squire of Thatchley.

The last time was when he had seen him in company with that bulwark of temperance in one thing, Mr. Peevers, at the doorway of the 'Pilgrims' Rest'—the abode of *Mrs. Rawlins*—that singular manageress, in whose remarkable face Jack Gurgoyne had professed to find so striking a resemblance to some painting or drawing in his possession—and thus and thus his memory went on and on, until at length he reached forward and opened the covering of the returned letter. The letter itself, which bore the usual endorsement, 'Not known,' was superscribed as follows:—

'MRS. RAWLINS,  
care of Mr. Price, at the Nag's Head,  
Ugborough,  
Essex.'

The name naturally seized his attention, and he tore open the second envelope more hastily than the first. What he read in his father's handwriting ran thus:—

'I have been searching you out for months. Ugborough is the last place to which I have traced you. Write to me at the appended address the moment you receive this. I want to see you in connection with what took place at Broodley Waters. I want you to assist me in remedying a great wrong and in punishing a villain. Fear no exposure of what concerns yourself alone. Trust me as before.

'R. B.'

Mrs. Rawlins—the name of the manageress of the 'Pilgrims' Rest.' Broodley Waters, the place mentioned by Jack Gurgoyne, in connection with his uncle, Walter Gurgoyne, on the evening—on

the evening—of course, on the evening when Richard's drunken father, Spike, had uttered threatening hints to Mrs. Rawlins, making allusion to something called by a strange name, called—called 'Jacob's Ladder.'

And Jack had talked in a drunken way about a fancied resemblance between Mrs. Rawlins and a portrait he had seen—or, was it not? which he had in his possession.

'In remedying a great wrong.' Matthew thought once again, as he had thought in many and many a dark moment, of his father's words, 'when I am dead and gone, my boy, and all my shame is buried with me;' and of old Mr. Chipples' evasive remonstrance, on Matthew's pressing him, in the hope of leading him to throw light on the subject; 'why seek to revive a shame that will be buried with your uncle?'

Was the remedy to be buried with the shame and the wrong?

And what was Vasper's object in trying to get possession of this returned letter, penned just before the writer's death? Was Vasper in any way concerned with the remedy?—or with the shame and the wrong?

Cogitating thus, Matthew changed his coat, that in which he had fallen asleep on the night of his uncle's death, and in which the letter had lain so long, and put on his hat. Then he walked straight off to Jack Gurgoyne's lodgings.

---

### CHAPTER XXX.

HE found his friend collapsed in a chair, his legs stretched out before him, his arms folded, and his chin sunk on his chest. On one side of him were the drawings which had been so ruthlessly condemned by the squire, and on the other a bottle of brandy, a jug of water and a glass.

'Don't speak to me, Mat. You see before you a crushed man.'

Matthew thought he certainly saw before him one who was approaching very near to a maudlin state of drunkenness.

'Come, come, Jack,' he began.

'This is a sadder case than Wolsey's, Mat; the proof of it is in this, that I cannot improve the occasion with you as he did with Cromwell. Why? because my despair is greater—my heart's too full.'

'Why, Jack—'

'If,' continued Mr. Gurgoyne, 'you think the spectacle an edifying one, and that it will be a warning to you, my boy; if you think that in pondering over the fall of a once stately column a lesson may be read which will be profitable to you in the future, then help yourself from the bottle—there's a clean glass on the shelf,—and contemplate me.'

And Mr. Gurgoyle stretched his legs out further, and thrust his hands into his trouser-pockets, with the weary air of a man who had nothing before him now in life but to offer himself as a model of despair to the contemplation of whomsoever it might interest and benefit.

'What nonsense, Jack! There is no reason for your giving way to a fit of the blues on account of what has happened this afternoon.'

'No reason!' cried Jack.

'Certainly not. Vasper is not the be-all and end-all in the restoration. But, Jack, I am come to talk about something else; about something—'

'If Vasper isn't the head of the affair, I should like to know who is?' interrupted Jack, with a little too much vivacity for a model of despair.

'The matter rests with the Restoration Committee,' replied Matthew; 'and if I know anything at all about the working of the affair, Kate and Pattie, backed up by Mrs. Parlby and Mr. Maybright, do just as they please with the committee.'

'Do you think so, my boy?' cried Jack, springing up without the least tone of fallen greatness in his voice now. 'Then I am all right! And, now, as you won't fill for yourself, I will fill for you; and by the way, now I think of it, I will do the same for myself also, before I forget it.'

'Steady, Jack! you have another inspiration now, you know—'

'All right: I remember her, God bless her! and here's to her and hers! Don't be afraid, Mat, I'm cutting down my liquor pretty fine now, and I shouldn't have had it out at all this afternoon if it hadn't been for that row just now. But what was that you said you were come to talk about—that something else?'

'Jack, you once told me that you had in your possession a portrait bearing a remarkable resemblance to Mrs. Rawlins of the 'Pilgrims' Rest'; you remember the person and the place?'

'Yes!' replied Jack with astonishment.

'And you spoke, if I remember right, of the original of this portrait, in connection with an uncle of yours, and with a place called, I think, Broodley Waters?'

'What a memory you have, Mat, for casual conversation! I did make these observations, and I remember to have looked again at the portrait, which I should have shown you, only that I was sent out of town very suddenly, if you remember, and when I went back you had left London yourself.'

'You have the portrait still?'

'Certainly. But, Mat, you don't mean to say that you left your heart in London in the keeping of the famous Rawlins, and that you are panting to behold something bearing a resemblance to her!'

'Nonsense, Jack! I want you simply to show me this portrait,



and then to tell me as much concerning it as you know, or as you are disposed to tell.'

'Here you are, my boy,' said Jack, going to a corner of the room, and beginning to toss some things out of a trunk. 'It's at the bottom of all these things somewhere. You shall see it, and you shall know—where the deuce is it?—all that I know about it—ah! here we are!'

And he laid before Mat a large sketch-book, somewhat worn and faded, but with its binding still in good repair.

'I can look at it without reservation, Jack?'

'Take your fill, in any part of it you like.'

---

### CHAPTER XXXI.

MATTHEW began with the first page of the sketch-book, and there read the name *Walter Gurgoyle*, written in ink, in a clear hand, with a date appended.

'That is my uncle's signature,' observed Jack.

Matthew turned over without interest the next three or four leaves on which sketches had been begun but not finished. At the next leaf he stopped.

'That's it!' he said.

'That's it, my boy!' repeated Jack. And now am I right or wrong? Is the resemblance fancied or real?'

It was the portrait of a woman—of a very young woman—done in water-colours, and, it seemed to Matthew, with the skill of a practised hand. Under it was written in ink, in the same hand as that of the signature on the first leaf—the word *Fanny*, with a date added, marking also the same year as that marked on the first leaf.

'Allowing,' said Matthew, 'for the change likely to be effected in the time—and this portrait was done, it appears by the date, some twenty years since—one would say, without hesitation, that it was a portrait of Mrs. Rawlins.'

'I told you so, my boy,' remarked Jack with triumph.

'It seems to be the portrait of a young woman of twenty or thereabouts,' continued Matthew as if to himself; 'and Mrs. Rawlins looks about forty; it's quite true she might be taken for less; but I should give her forty.'

The next leaf seized Matthew's attention as strongly as the last; not by the sketch appearing on it, but by what was written under the sketch—*Broodley Waters*, in ink as before, and in the same hand, and with the same year marked.

The sketch itself represented a large old house in a park. The house showed two of its fronts; the smaller one in the shade, a long, low, red-brick building, with high, narrow openings, a steep

roof and dormer windows, and chimneys disproportionately towering and heavy—in the Dutch style, introduced after the accession of the Prince of Orange to the throne: the principal one, in the light, a higher, three-storied erection, also in red brick, but with white pilasters and a heavy cornice, and in the middle a pretentious portico with pediment and columns, a specimen of the so-called 'classic' style of the time of one of the earlier Georges. This pile, ugly perhaps from an architectural point of view, had, nevertheless, in the picture, the attractive mellowness of age and its associations. The real motive of the sketch, however, seemed to be in the beauty of the park, with its heavily timbered sweeps and undulations, and the wide-spreading sheets of misty water lying in the foreground.

'Well?' inquired Jack.

'Capitally sketched and coloured,' remarked Matthew, and he turned to the next leaf.

Here, again, his eye was first caught not by the sketch but by the writing under—*Jacob's Ladder*, in ink, and in the same hand, and with the same year marked as before.

The sketch showed a broad, flat valley, broken by rugged masses of rock rising out of luxuriant growths of underwood and fern. But the striking object in the representation was a crag, or cliff, or whatever the singular elevation might be called; rearing itself apparently to a considerable height, and having one of its sides so abruptly steep as to be within a little of being perpendicular, and the other sloping enough to afford by means of rough natural footholds marked here and there a comparatively easy access to the top. Rising sheer out of the area of the valley, and quite disconnected from any other eruption of the surface, it appeared at the first glance almost like an artificial formation erected there as a means of ascent.

This, then, was the 'Jacob's Ladder' alluded to by the drunken Spike in his threatening hints to Mrs. Rawlins.

The next and last sketch—for the following leaves were still uncut from the block—was the portrait of a very young child—a mere baby, with a light touch of golden down on its head, and large, round, bright blue eyes. Underneath was written *Fanny* in ink, and in the same hand as before, and with the same year marked.

'That, I suppose,' remarked Matthew, 'is the offspring of—the original of the first portrait.'

'And of my Uncle Walter,' added Jack. 'I know nothing about it further than it died in its infancy.'

'The child died,' mused Matthew.

'The particular interest attaching to this little picture,' continued Jack, 'is that it was probably one of the last, if not absolutely the last, pieces of work my uncle ever did.'

'He died also very soon after the portrait was taken, then?' observed Matthew.

'He accidentally shot himself, mortally, while out shooting at this very place, called *Broodley Waters*.'

'Ah!'

'Yes.'

'And that is all you know concerning this sketch-book, Jack?'

'That is all, Mat, except that my uncle had been living in the neighbourhood of this *Broodley Waters*—in the village, in fact, called by that name—for some time previous to his sudden death, with the original of the first portrait. I don't think—in fact, I was given to understand that she was not actually married to him in the eye of the law, as they say—I mean—'

'That no legal ceremony of marriage had ever been gone through between them.'

'Exactly.'

'You never heard her own name?'

'No.'

'Would you mind lending me this sketch-book, Jack?'

'Certainly not, my boy. Keep it as long as you like.'

'Thanks. By the way, I am going to London in the morning, Jack, by the first train.'

'With the sketch-book?'

'Yes, if you don't mind.'

'You have my permission, Mat. I don't ask any questions, because I can rely on your discretion, if by means of that book you happened to light on anything unpleasant, not to me, but to any sensitive members of my family, the Reverend Bob, for example.'

'All right, Jack. And now, good-bye. Touching the church drawings, stick to them for the present, and be quite certain—I am not talking at random, mind—be quite certain that you can count without fear on the good offices of the true friends I have named with the Restoration Committee.'

'You will be back soon, Jack?'

'In a couple of days probably.'

The next morning Matthew, with the *returned letter* and the sketch-book in his travelling bag, was at the Carborough Station in time for the early train to London. Seeing the squire's carriage at the entrance, he was not astonished to encounter Mr. Vasper at the ticket-office.

'Hallo!' said the squire with quite an air of good-fellowship, 'where are you going to?'

'I? I am going up to London.'

'Ah! I understand,' returned the squire, in the same tone of excellent good-fellowship. 'You sent me word yesterday you were going to leave. Now, look here, my dear fellow, go back to your work. I don't want to accept your resignation—the devil! What do you want to talk about going to London for?'

It was not now that he seemed merely to smile. His whole face seemed to be nothing but a smile. Matthew looked at him fixedly.

The cunning face before him decided him to yield to the promptings of pride (it should be noted that his pride was in a large measure supported by the thought of the other good, solid agencies he had to fall back upon), and he said,—

‘Why shouldn’t I go to London?’

Now, it was the squire who looked fixedly, and though the smile remained, it changed its expression in a remarkable manner.

‘You can go to London,’ he observed at length, ‘or to h— if you like.’

He then himself took a ticket for London, and Matthew did the same, not, however, getting into the same carriage as the squire.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

ARRIVED at Euston Station, Matthew gave the name of his hotel to a cabman, and was driven away.

Vasper, after taking care to hear the direction given by Matthew, also got into a cab, and was hurried off, at a pace accelerated by the offer of a double fare, to his house in town. Stopping here for a few moments, he gave another order to the cabman, and in ten minutes or so got out in the quarter mentioned in the opening of this narrative.

After making a few turns here and there, as if with no pressing business in view, he sauntered into the street along which Matthew, on the night of his so-called uncle’s death, had staggered through the misty moonlight.

Presently Vasper stopped before the house itself where that unexpected death had occurred.

A placard, announcing that the lease of the house was to be sold, and giving the name of the agent from whom information could be obtained, appeared on each side of the ground-floor window.

‘*Sacré nom d’un chien, as-tu de la chance, mon vieux!*’ muttered Vasper to himself in the language in which Matthew had heard him conversing with Kate that winter night at the ‘Golden Sheaf.’ ‘*Voilà justement ton affaire!—l’individu que tu cherche!—Comment s’appelle-t-il, ce péquin-là?—Voyons,*’ and craning his neck over the area railing, he continued, ‘*Mr. G. R—a—y—Mr. G. Raymond Filps—dans cette rue même—et le numéro doit se trouver tout près d’ici.*’

He glanced round and strolled back a few paces.

‘*En effet!—le voilà!*’

And he crossed the street, and entering Mr. Raymond Filps’ vestibule, rang that overstrained gentleman’s bell.

Mr. Filps, finding a person of Vasper’s appearance shown into his office, rushed, as usual, into the passage, and bawled to his clerk to get on with ‘them inventories,’ to his servant to be ready at a

moment's notice to run for a cab, and to his wife, not to wait dinner for him. Next, while scanning several letters before him with an air of painful concern, he remarked to his visitor that 'it was overwhelming;' and then with an obsequious bow, asked him if he would be kind enough to explain what had procured for him the honour of that visit.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Vasper, in his soft, clear voice, 'if you will sit down and leave off fidgeting.'

Mr. Raymond Filps looked fully as much astonished as he might be expected to do.

'Sir!' he gasped.

'Well, sit still, then, and listen,' said Vasper with unchanging insolence.

It is true that he had measured up the auctioneer and estate agent in the twinkling of an eye. He judged Filps to be a bully, but a bully who would swallow the grossest insolence if payment went with it.

'You are the agent for the house over there, almost opposite, where the bills are stuck up.'

'Yes, sir; certn'y, sir; d'ye want to negotiate for the lease, sir?'

'Didn't a man, calling himself Bagnall, use to live there?'

'Yes, sir; certn'y he did.'

'Do you know anything about him?'

'Yes, sir; certn'y I do—too much.'

'Well, what do you know?'

'You don't want to negotiate for the lease then, sir?'

'No—damn the lease; no.'

'You only want to know about this here Bagnall, then, sir?'

'Not so much about him; he is dead.'

'Oh! you know that much, sir?' observed Filps, with a look of disappointment.

'Yes; do you know any more?'

'Well, you see, sir, my time is—'

'So very precious. Oh yes, I know all about that. Well, just tell me what you *do* know about Bagnall, and I'll give you a couple of sovereigns.'

'Well, sir, I know this: The old fellow,—I ought to say,' said Filps, hastily, for a sudden thought came into his mind, 'the old gentleman—took a short under-lease from a former tenant; with notice to me, sir, and my sanction first had and obtained, of course, sir—'

'Do tell me what you know, if you know anything at all.'

'Certn'y, sir. Well, sir, he lived very respectable, for all as I know to the contrary. Well, I believe the old gentleman used,—between you and me and—excuse me, sir—the gate post,—as the saying is, to take a little—well, sir, I mean a great deal—more than was good for him sometimes; in fact, very often.'

'Well?'

'Well, sir, and so it went on like that until about last November, and then—well, sir, my time is precious, so I must come to an end—and then he died.'

'You don't say so!'

'Yes, sir, and what is more,' continued Mr. Filps, dropping into a mysterious tone, 'it was a very—'

'Sudden death. And that is all *you* know! You have told me nothing for my money that I didn't know before.'

'Now, if it was about the nevvv—'

'Aha! There was a nephew, was there?' said Vasper, with just a gleam of interest in his eyes; a very suppressed gleam, but visible enough for Filps to notice it.

'However,' remarked the latter, when he saw the nephew was a card that had more value in the game than he had anticipated, 'my time is very precious, and—'

'Yes, yes; I know,' said Vasper. 'Sit down, sit down, and don't make believe that you are going away in that cab you were bawling out about.'

'Really, sir—'

'Yes, I know. I shall double your—fee, and you will tell me all about the nephew.'

'Well, sir, this nevvv—he—he—well, he—but won't you ask me a few questions, sir, and then I shall—'

'And then you will know whether you know anything about the matter at all. I shall leave you to tell me what you really *do* know, if you know anything. My opinion is, you don't.'

'Oh yes, I do, sir. This nevvv, d'ye see, he didn't always live with the old man—the old gentleman, I mean; he didn't come to live with him until about three years, I reckon, before the old gent died.'

'Go on.'

'Certn'y, sir. Well, this nevvv was about thirty years old, and a precious keen blade he is, too! I should advise anybody as had anything to do with that customer to keep their weather eye open, as Jack says at sea—'

'Oh, you would, would you?'

'I should indeed, sir. And a nice beauty he is, into the bargain; as bad as the old gent to drink, I was told.'

'You were *told*? Who told you?' asked Vasper, seeing his way to another and perhaps more useful source of information.

'Well, there was a charwoman, d'ye see, sir—'

'And she told you? What is her name, and where does she live?'

Now, as Richard's mother, Mrs. Spike, had never made the statement in question, Mr. Filps thought it prudent to withhold her name and address.

'Well, sir, I forget,' he said, scratching his head.

'Was there any other servant, or did any one else live with the uncle and nephew?'

'No, sir; nobody. They lived quite by themselves, with just the charwoman going in by the day to do the work.'

'And so the nephew used to drink too, eh?'

'Oh, there's no doubt about that, sir. I've seen my gentleman down there, at the "Pilgrims' Rest,"'

'Aha! He went to the "Pilgrims' Rest," did he?'

'Yes, sir; do you know it, sir?'

'You have seen him there yourself, have you?'

'Oh yes, sir, I have seen my fine gentleman there; and I saw him one night out with the handsome manageress—Mrs. Rawlins, I think they call her.'

So strong a gleam came into Vasper's eyes this time, that it could have escaped no one. It did not escape Mr. Filps, who, thinking that he had at last found an opportunity of gratifying in some measure the grudge he had against Matthew, continued,—

'A nice character he would appear, I expect, if all his little doings came out.'

'By the way, you haven't yet thought of mentioning his name,' observed Vasper.

'That's odd!—I haven't,' exclaimed Mr. Filps, who had no wish to hide the name of an enemy whom he thought he had successfully traduced. 'He didn't have the old gent's name, sir; it was something else—like—oh, I know now—it was Bernock—Matthew Bernock.'

'Exactly.'

'And he was in the—what-d'ye-call-it line—the harchey—'

'The architectural line. Exactly.'

'Oh, you know him, then, do you, sir?'

'And so that is all you know about them—nothing more than that?' remarked Vasper. 'Well, it isn't much for the money, you must admit.'

He did not mention that in his own mind he had to admit that it *was* much—*very* much for the money.

'No, it isn't much that you can tell me, certainly,' he continued, 'but perhaps you know somebody else who could give me a little information.'

Mr. Filps's mind turned to Mr. Chipples; but the thought occurred to him that, in order to keep the profit of the business in his own hands, Chipples should be kept in the background.

'Well, sir,' he replied, 'I *do* know some one as used to know the old gent, and I might perhaps be able to obtain, through him, the information you require.'

'No, no; what I want I wish to learn now. But it is of very little consequence after all. Still, if you could have fetched this individual at once—'

'Well, sir, I *might* be able to manage that, if I happened to find him at 'ome. But you see, sir, as I have said before, my time—'

'Yes. Well, go and bring your friend here, and I will make your fee a five-pound note.'

Mr. Filps gave a sign of not thinking the remuneration equal to his loss of time, but nevertheless he put on his hat to go.

'You haven't done me the favour of giving me your name, sir,' he said, turning round.

'No; it won't do you any good to know. You can't make any money out of it, so I will save you putting yourself to the unnecessary trouble of trying to remember it.'

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. FILPS went off without further delay to Mrs. Spike's house, where, as it may be remembered, Richard's drunken father had made known, in the course of certain observations one night at the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' that Mr. Chipples lodged.

'Is that beautiful lodger of yours in?' asked Mr. Filps of Mrs. Spike. He had, as usual, felt too severely the strain and haste of life to think of knocking before he walked in. 'I mean was he too drunk last night to be able to get out to-day?'

'He was rather poorly this morning, sir, and—'

'Oh, then he *was* drunk last night? Why didn't you say so at first? Upstairs, in the back room, ain't it?'

'Yes, Mr. Filps, sir, in the old room.'

And Mrs. Spike was very much relieved to see the dreaded rent collector pass up the staircase without stopping to make an allusion to that ever-pressing matter of arrears.

'So you've been at it again, have you?' exclaimed Mr. Filps, who, in entering Mr. Chipples' room, had again waived the ceremony of rapping at the door.

'Is that you, Mr. Filps, sir?' said Mr. Chipples, shrinking out of the light.

'Yes, it is me, and I want you to come along with me this minute.'

'Oh, Mr. Filps, sir, I can't get out to-day. You must excuse me, sir, you really must.'

'Oh, bother about that!' returned Mr. Filps. 'It's only the blues that's troubling you. Here, wake up and stir yourself, and come along with me. There's somebody waiting for you at my place.'

'Who is it, Mr. Filps?' asked the other, shaking in all his limbs.

'Oh, no one that you know,' replied Mr. Filps, evasively. 'A gent as wants to know something about those Bagnall or Bernock folks—the old chap that died, and his specimen of a nevy.'

'Oh, Mr. Filps, sir!' murmured Chipples, shaking more than ever now, 'I can't, I can't, sir. I don't know anything about either



of them ; I don't indeed ; no more than you know yourself, Mr. Filps.'

'Come along, I tell you,' returned Filps. 'Why, there's money hanging to it, man !'

'I can't do it, Mr. Filps, sir. Spare me, sir, spare me.'

'Did any one ever see such an old idiot ?' exclaimed Mr. Filps. 'Not to lift his hand to take money when it's thrust into his face. Look here, if you're going to act like this, I've got something to tell you. You promised to pay Mrs. Spike what you owe her for your lodgings, so that she could pay me her arrears of rent ; but you haven't done it. Now, just you come along with me, or I bundle Spike and his wife into the street ; and where will you have to take shelter then, and what will Mrs. Spike have to say to you then, I should like to know ?'

This cogent line of reasoning proved too much for Chipples in the end.

'There, that's the way to take things in this life,' said Mr. Filps as he walked out into the street with the other. 'Always follow somebody else's lead when there's money in it. And now I'm going to show you that I'm not the hard kind of customer some folks say I am. I'm going to treat you to three-penn'orth o' gin, and another on the top of that, if you like, just to straighten you up a bit, and make you leave off shakin'.'

'You are very good, Mr. Filps, you are, indeed, sir. It's that old complaint of mine that I have to take a little drop for now and then ; if it wasn't for that—'

'Yes, yes, I know,' interposed Mr. Filps ; and he led the way into the 'Pilgrims' Rest' and ordered the gin.

'And now,' he resumed, when, a few minutes afterwards, they both reached his front door, 'don't give way to any silly, qualmy scruples ; just give all the information you can, and you'll come in for a very handsome tip ; and as for that—why, as for that,' continued Mr. Filps with an air of indifference, 'we'll go shares, and say no more about it.'

And it was because Mr. Filps thought that the amount of the reward anticipated would depend on the ease with which Mr. Chipples' tongue was made to move, that he had risked the cost of the gin.

---

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

MR. FILPS, having introduced his shrinking companion by name, was about to take his seat, when Vasper remarked,—

'I won't take up any more of your time at present, Mr. Filps ; especially as you have so often reminded me that it is so precious.'

Upon this hint Mr. Filps felt constrained to withdraw ; not, how-

ever, before going up to an almanack, and, under cover of pretending to consult it, he had removed the stopper from a speaking-tube which was suspended there.

This proceeding did not escape the observant eyes of Mr. Vasper, who had taken note of the existence of the speaking-tube during its owner's absence. Accordingly, Mr. Filps having withdrawn, and the door being closed upon him, the squire got up with the intention of closing the tube. In the act, however, he paused; and with his usual smile, which was an intentional contraction of the muscles, and in no sense an act of spontaneity, sat down again, *leaving the speaking-tube open.*

'Mr. Chipples, I want you to give me a little information about some acquaintances of yours,' he began, and at the same time he laid on the table five sovereigns, over which, however, he retained control with the tips of his fingers. 'I shall offer you this little remuneration in return for your trouble. The information I require is only of slight importance, and can in no case prove of any great service; if, however, it aids in the trifling business I have in view, I shall remunerate you still further. Therefore, you see, upon the candour with which you speak depends your further recompense. Above all, have no fear: no serious interests are concerned in my questions.'

Then he carefully directed the attention of the trembling Chipples to the open tube, and commenced his interrogation in a voice that was only audible to the person interrogated.

Mr. Filps in consequence caught very little of the conversation. Some fragments, however, he did catch.

It happened after a few minutes that the squire, intentionally or unconsciously, slid the yellow coins under his finger-tips in the direction of Chipples. The latter, who from the beginning had watched the money with a nervous apprehension of its being withdrawn, reached out his hand to take it, and in his excitement forgot the squire's caution about the speaking-tube.

'But the elder son in America—' he began aloud.

'An elder son in America!' exclaimed Vasper.

For the moment he also forgot the tube. Then pointing to it, and shaking a warning finger in the other's face while giving him the money, he resumed the conversation in a voice which Filps could not hear.

Presently he took another sovereign from his pocket and placed it under his finger as he had placed the others. Again excitement got the better of Mr. Chipples' discretion.

'There are no traces in this country, probably because the elder son was born abroad—'

He was interrupted by Vasper's warning finger, and the conversation again became inaudible.

At length—

'Then you know nothing,' the squire said aloud—intentionally—

this time, 'of his antecedents before the time of your first making his acquaintance?'

'Nothing, sir,' replied Mr. Chipples, taking up the other sovereign and rising from his seat; 'nothing whatever.'

'Nothing even by report?'

'Absolutely nothing, sir. Perhaps I might make bold enough to surmise that *you*, sir, probably do.'

Vasper merely contracted the muscles of his face into the form of a smile.

'By the way,' he asked, 'does Mrs. R. herself know that architectural individual is still alive?'

Mr. Chipples nodded in affirmation.

'You are likely to remain at this address of yours for the present?' inquired Vasper.

'Oh yes, sir,' replied Mr. Chipples, bowing himself out.

He was arrested in the passage by Mr. Filps' voice calling out to him, at which Vasper nodded his head with smiling approval, as though he would say, 'I expected that.'

He shut the door after Chipples and went straight to the speaking-tube and listened. As he had anticipated, Filps, concluding from the fact of its not having been closed by the squire during the recent conversation, that its existence had not been observed, neglected to close it on his side now.

'Well, what did he give you?' Filps was heard to say by Vasper listening.

'There is your share, Mr. Filps,' replied Chipples' trembling voice.

'What! a solitary pound!—you mean to say you only made a couple o'quid out of him?'

The listener smiled approvingly as before.

'Well,' continued Filps, 'you're either an old fool or an old rogue. I don't put any more business into your hands. I know yer!'

'Mr. Filps, sir!'

'Well, now look here,' resumed Filps; 'what about this "elder son in America"—who was he—a son of that old Bagnall that died?'

'Yes, Mr. Filps, yes,' Chipples was heard to stammer.

The listener at the tube now began to scowl.

'And this elder son is alive, eh?' inquired Mr. Filps.

'No—o—o, Mr. Filps, no; he's—he's dead, sir,' replied Chipples.

The listener in the other room grew smiling again, and marked to himself his approval of this reply with several nods.

'And this Mrs. R. that I heard mentioned,' continued Filps; 'that was our Mrs. Rawlins, I suppose?'

'Yes, Mr. Filps, yes, sir.'

'And the "harcheytectural individual"—who's he? That's the old chap's nevvy, that there Bernock cove, I reckon?'

'Ye—e—yes, Mr. Filps, yes, sir,' answered Chipples.

The listener again smiled and signified his silent approval with nods again and again repeated.

He had achieved his object in leaving the pipe open. He knew now that there was no collusion of a nature to be feared between Chipples and Filps.

'Well,' the latter was heard to say, 'and what else passed between you—what did he want to know in particular?'

'Nothing else, Mr. Filps, nothing else of any consequence, Mr. Filps, I assure you, sir.'

'Oh, and so you were knockin' your heads together all that time about nothing else, were you?'

'About nothing of importance that I can remember, Mr. Filps—nothing, sir, I assure you. You're too suspicious, Mr. Filps, you are, sir, really.'

'All right,' Mr. Filps was heard to reply; 'all right, Mr. Chipples, keep it dark if you like, Mr. Chipples; but I'd advise you very strongly to settle up your accounts with Mrs. Spike out of all this pile o' money you've been making by this affair; for if her arrears ain't paid up sharp, out she goes—and where will *you* make *your* bed—eh, Mr. Chipples?'

Mr. Chipples was heard a moment afterwards to leave the house; and Vasper, leaving the reward he had promised to Filps on a desk, walked out also.

He happened to pass the 'Pilgrims' Rest' just as Matthew was entering that abode of hospitality. The squire, not failing to catch sight of his agent, smiled; and on meeting a cab, took it and returned to his town house.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

UNCONSCIOUS of having just been seen by Vasper, Matthew entered an unoccupied division of the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' and asked for some brandy—an ally without which he very seldom now prepared for an interview with any one.

'Long time since we've seen you 'ere, sir,' observed one of Mr. Juniper's smart young men, in serving the brandy.

'Yes,' replied Matthew. 'By the way, is Mrs. Rawlins visible?'

'She's inside there, sir. D'ye want to see her, sir?—she's on'y talkin' with the guv'nor and the old woman.'

'I wish you would ask Mrs. Rawlins if I could have a word with her for an instant.'

In a few moments Mrs. Rawlins appeared. Matthew saw that she recognised him.

'You want to speak to me, sir?' she asked.

'You have some recollection of me, Mrs. Rawlins, I think,' began Matthew.

'Yes.'

'I should be glad, if it were possible, to have a few words with you in private,' continued Matthew.

'In private?'

'Yes, but first of all, perhaps you will be kind enough to cast your eye over this letter.'

And he put the returned letter into her hands.

Impassive as her face usually was, it betrayed emotion as she read the addresses on the envelopes, and then the letter itself.

'You take it for granted then,' she said at length, and with a perceptible effort to steady her voice, 'that I am the Mrs. Rawlins to whom this letter was addressed?'

'I have little reason to doubt it.'

'I see,' she observed, scrutinising the date stamped on the post-office envelope, 'that the letter was not returned until the day after the night of your uncle's death.'

Matthew, remembering the acquaintance which the speaker seemed to have with Mr. Chipples, and remembering also her visit to Mrs. Spike, was at no loss to account for Mrs. Rawlins' knowledge either of the date of the event she had referred to, or of the fact of his being some relative of the deceased writer of the letter.

'And, for the reason you mention,' he said, 'the letter never found its way back to the writer; and it was only yesterday that, being reminded of its existence, I opened it.'

'Well?' she asked, as if to signify that it was for him, and not for her, to continue, if anything more had to be said.

'Hadh't we better speak in a more private place than this?' he inquired.

She lifted a flap in the counter, and led the way into a room behind the bar.

'I want to speak to this gentleman privately,' she said to Mr. Juniper, whom they found there.

Mr. Juniper looked at Matthew suspiciously, and though he retired, it was with reluctance.

'That is Mr. Juniper's mother,' remarked Mrs. Rawlins, in reply to a look of inquiry which Matthew gave in regard to an elderly person propped up with pillows in an easy-chair. 'She is too deaf to hear, unless you speak close to her ear.'

Mr. Juniper's mother seemed at this moment to make up for the feebleness of her hearing by the intensity of her gaze. Matthew responded to this with a bow; and then took the seat pointed out by the manageress of the 'Pilgrims' Rest.'

'Mrs. Rawlins,' he began, 'can you tell me anything about the *wrong* which it is proposed in this letter to remedy?'

She shook her head in reply, looking at him steadfastly.

'Perhaps you know something about it, but don't wish to tell me what you know?—Is it so?'

She shook her head again, keeping up the steadfast look.

'You may not actually know,' he resumed, 'but perhaps you are able to surmise what the wrong alluded to was?'

The same shake of the head. To Matthew there had always been a something disagreeable inseparable from Mrs. Rawlins' manner. This something now appeared to take definable appearance in the shake of the head and the sustained stare; signs which seemed to him not only repellant but irritatingly vulgar.

The irritation thus begotten caused him to produce the sketch-book with less delicate preparation than he had intended.

'I am obliged to show you by means of this book,' he said, 'that I am not wholly unacquainted with your earlier life, in order to induce a little more confidence on your part in speaking with me.'

Notwithstanding that she had by this time mastered the further emotion caused by the production of the sketch-book, and restrained herself to simply regarding, without touching, the book, it was clear to Matthew from her look that she was hungering to see its contents.

'That,' said Matthew, pointing out the picture of the old house, 'is the Broodley Waters mentioned in the letter. You doubtless remember the name of the owner of that property?'

Matthew did not know it himself, and she did not tell him; she said nothing.

'That,' he continued, turning to another leaf, 'is a curious sketch.'

She looked but without a word.

'It represents the *Jacob's Ladder*, to which I happened one night to hear Spike make reference while he was speaking to you.'

This hint that Matthew knew some one who had knowledge of her, in connection with the spot indicated, moved her, for she turned her look upon him with a marked dilation of the eyes.

'Here,' resumed Matthew, 'is a portrait of yourself twenty years ago. I don't find that you are greatly changed.'

She looked at the picture keenly but in silence. 'And this,' he observed, gently, 'is a sketch of your little girl.'

Still not a word; but a tightening of the lips, and a certain look in the eyes, told Matthew that Jack had been right in his surmise that it *was* her child.

'Did you find this sketch-book amongst your uncle's effects?' she inquired, 'or did it come into your hands through young Mr. Gurgyle, who once or twice came here with you?'

'Instead of retorting on you by refusing to answer in my turn, I will give you an immediate reply. I obtained the book from young Mr. Gurgyle,' said Matthew. 'Then, after studying what he was about to add, he continued,—"It was also from the same gentleman that I learnt of the sad end at Broodley Waters of Mr. *Walter Gurgyle*."

While maintaining her steady regard before his, she did not conceal a certain nervousness in the action of her interlaced fingers.

'Did your friend tell you,' she asked at length, 'that the greatest object of Mr. Walter Gurgyle's life was to marry me?'

'No.'

'Did he tell you what the obstacle to the marriage was?'

'No; he doesn't know probably.'

'Is it any part of the inquiry you have engaged in to inform yourself about that obstacle.'

'Certainly not. I will tell you why I venture, at this stage, to make that assertion. The letter you have just read conveys an assurance that the assistance sought from you would not lead to—would not—' Matthew here cast about for a way of softening the phraseology of the letter—'would not, in short, involve any intrusion upon your own affairs. I take that to mean that such an intrusion is not necessary to the object mentioned in the letter. Be assured, then, that I shall not go out of my way to cause what I thus infer to be unnecessary.'

'I quite understand you,' she said; 'but now, what can I tell you beyond what I have already told you—that I know nothing about any great wrong which has to be remedied?'

'And,' added Matthew, 'to go back to the altered form of my first question, you cannot even *surmise* what the wrong may have been?'

'I cannot.'

'This letter,' said Matthew, again unfolding it, 'expresses a desire to see you in connection with what took place at Broodley Waters. Now, though *you* are unable to form such a surmise from a knowledge of the facts referred to, perhaps, if you would put me in possession of the facts, *I* might be able to light on a clue to the wrong. Will you enable me to try? Will you, in short, tell me, Mrs. Rawlins, what it was that this letter alludes to as having taken place at Broodley Waters?'

'Why should I?'

'I will tell you why you should. The fact stares me in the face that there is something personal to yourself, and in some way connected with Broodley Waters, which you desire not to be—not to be—not to be intruded upon, and which, according to this letter, is quite unnecessary to the business of remedying this wrong. But if, instead of receiving from you a statement from which all that is unnecessary is excluded, I go down to Broodley Waters to collect facts for the purpose of preparing a statement myself, I may, against my own wish and against all desirability, obtrude upon matters which—which, as I said before, are unnecessary to the business I am proposing to take in hand.'

She would signify no assent to this, either by word, look, or gesture, but continued to regard him with a sullen stare.

'Do I make my reasons clear?' asked Matthew.

'I suppose there is some sense in what you say,' she said at length, with indifference.

'Then,' urged Matthew, 'you will save me the necessity of going down to Broodley Waters, to arrive, no doubt surely, but in all probability very slowly, at what you can tell me in a few minutes.'

'You are quite right; there is very little to tell.'

'But what there is, you will tell me?'

'Yes,' she replied, slowly; 'I don't see why I shouldn't.'

Then she paused in reflection.

Mr. Juniper's mother seized this as a fair opportunity for getting a little information about what was going on under her eyes.

'Is it the gas?' she asked.

Mrs. Rawlins shook her head in reply.

'Because I know,' continued the old lady, 'that James won't have the gas above the first floor. They waste it so, out of sight.'

Mrs. Rawlins nodded her complete assent.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

'I HAVE very little to tell you in connection with Broodley,' Mrs Rawlins began, turning to Matthew, 'because our stay there only lasted about a year. Mr. Gurgoyle chose that place, for the same reason that we had chosen all the places we had stayed at. The scenery was pretty and the place quiet; the chief thing, in fact, we had in view was to rest in seclusion until it should be possible for our marriage to take place.'

She was thinking more of justifying herself in Matthew's eyes than of telling him what he wanted to know.

'The obstacle to our marriage,' she continued, 'might have unshackled us, but he would not; for revenge he kept between us as far as he could—that is, as far as our marriage was concerned. *My* revenge on *him* will be a bitter one.'

Matthew judged from the light in her eyes, and her whitened lips, that it would be quite as bitter as she could make it.

'But though we lived a retired life,' she resumed, 'Mr. Gurgoyle formed one acquaintance there, and a very intimate one, with your uncle, Mr. Bagnall. There seemed to be a great deal in common between them. Your uncle managed the Broodley estates; indeed, he acted in all things with the same unlimited control that he would have used if he had been the owner; and in effect he was so regarded, for the owner himself, I believe, was hardly ever there. Mr. Hunston and his wife were abroad, as usual, when we went to Broodley.'

Matthew, remembering that his friend the parson, Mr. Maybright, had spoken of the Hunstons as the predecessors of the Vaspers in the ownership of the property managed by his so-called uncle, observed regretfully,—

'Ah, then, you cannot probably tell me much about the Hunstons?'

'You will hear, in a moment. Your uncle, in the position I tell



you of, gave Mr. Gurgoyle unlimited facilities for roaming about the estates, sketching, boating, fishing, riding, and shooting at his own times and pleasure. Fatally for himself, and fatally for my—for me—Mr. Gurgoyle availed himself of these facilities.'

She paused here for a moment, evidently in the effort to master a sudden wave of emotion.

'While out shooting one day,' she resumed, 'and in getting through a hedge with a gun in his hand, he mortally wounded himself.'

'Was any one with him at the time?' asked Matthew eagerly. He feared for the moment that there had been, and that it was his father.

'Yes, one of the gamekeepers,' replied Mrs. Rawlins.

Matthew gave a sigh of relief.

'Oh, that was not the crime alluded to in the letter,' observed Mrs. Rawlins. 'There was no crime about it. Mr. Gurgoyle lived just long enough after the accident to be able to tell certain persons whom the gamekeeper had succeeded in calling to his aid how it happened. He did not live long enough, however, to be able to tell me.'

'You had no reason to suspect the truth of what was said by the gamekeeper and these persons who were called to give aid?'

'Not the slightest. These persons consisted of a gentleman who happened to be driving his four-in-hand along a neighbouring road at the time, and all who were with him—that is, a party of several ladies and gentlemen, and two grooms. It is impossible to suspect that so many persons, for the most part not related to each other, and coming from different and distant parts, and also the two grooms and the gamekeeper, could have any reason for conspiring on the spot to misrepresent what Mr. Gurgoyle said when at the point of death.'

'What did he say?'

'That the trigger of his gun had caught in the hedge at a moment when the gamekeeper, who had got through the gap first, was several paces in front of him.'

'There was an inquest of course; were all the witnesses of the accident, or rather all those who were present to hear Mr. Gurgoyle's last words—were they *all* called to give evidence?'

'No, it was not considered necessary,' replied Mrs. Rawlins. 'But I, though the shock had nearly killed me, was so determined not to leave my mind exposed to the misery of some suspicion arising later to torment me, when it might be too late to allay it—I myself, fearing this, took the trouble of seeing and questioning each one who had heard the last words.'

'And all told you the same thing?'

'All told me the same thing.'

'I may or I may not subsequently think it worth my while to inquire into the affair on the spot,' said Matthew; 'but I must confess it would appear that a clue to "any wrong to be remedied" was not to be found in this occurrence.'

'Some few weeks before Mr. Gurgoyle's death my little girl was born. Now here comes a coincidence, if you think it worth while to take note of it. Well, as for a coincidence, I suppose there was nothing remarkable in that. When we read of the number of accidental deaths estimated to take place in the world every day of our lives, and of the number of births, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the very day after Mr. Gurgoyle's death another man met with a fatal accident, and that his wife was left, just as I was left, the mother of a baby only seven weeks old.'

'Why, cert'n'y ! a commercial gent !' suddenly exclaimed the old lady in the chair, and then, probably concluding from the length of the discussion that Mrs. Rawlins alone was unequal to it, she continued, 'if we don't want nothing, why does the young man push his goods on us for ? Some people won't take no for an answer.'

Mrs. Rawlins shook her head in refutation of this new surmise of the old lady's ; and turning again to Matthew, resumed,—

'But this was the coincidence : the other unfortunate pair was Mr. Hunston and his wife.'

'Mr. Hunston, for whom Mr. Bagnall managed the Broodley estates ?' said Matthew.

'Yes. He met his death accidentally about the same time by drowning, I believe, at Dover, while slowly travelling back from somewhere abroad with his wife. It was intended that her confinement should take place, if possible, at Broodley Waters—the family seat ; but it occurred on the way at Dover. It was while she was recovering from this that her husband's death happened. They brought her on to Broodley Waters, for it had been desired by both her and her husband that the christening at any rate should take place there ; and they brought her husband's body there also. After the funeral she took to her bed and kept it. I had strength and will, and lived. Mrs. Hunston gave way, and died.'

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

MATTHEW was too well practised in the pleasures of novel reading, and therefore too well acquainted with the incidents of real life which are introduced into fiction, not to recognise in the incidents of real life which had just been related to him a promising opening to the unravelling of a 'wrong to be remedied.'

'The children lived ?' he asked.

'No.'

This brief response seemed to effectually close up the promising opening.

'H'm,' he muttered. 'So they died—the two children.'

'Yes, and under what you may, perhaps, consider peculiar circumstances.'

'Ah!'

'Your uncle was very good to me in my bereavement. Mr. Gurgyle had made no will before the accident, and he had no time to make one after. I make that no reproach against him; for I know well what he intended and what he was always going to do; and I know well what must have been the bitterness of his regret at the last moment.'

'And his family did nothing to repair the omission.'

'Your uncle communicated with them, but they flatly declined to recognise any claim or request whatever on my part.'

'I am very glad that my relative at least came to your aid in such a strait.'

'Yes, and he not only came to my aid with money,' continued Mrs. Rawlins, 'but with other means as well. He thought, I suppose, that my own little girl was not enough to take my mind from my sorrow, to prevent me dwelling too much on my own unhappy affairs; and so he got me to interest myself also in the other little fatherless girl at the Hall. It appeared that there was no woman relative—or at least no woman relative was called in—to superintend those who had the care of the child. Everything was under the direction of your relative, Mr. Bagnall. The little girl was often brought to my house, and sometimes I went to the Hall, as it was called, to see her there: she needed a great deal of attention.'

'She was a sickly child, I suppose?'

'Not sickly, but delicate. Hers, I thought, was a constitution that would do well with constant care, but only with constant care—a healthy but an extremely sensitive constitution. Then she gave signs that she would show as she grew up great activity of mind. You could see that, in her bright, dark eyes, which were too often wide open when they should have been closed in sleep. My little girl, Fanny, was of a different temperament. I thought that with her quiet, restful nature, there was every chance of her living and thriving.'

Matthew turned to the water-colour sketch of the little Fanny.

'Yes, that is her portrait,' said Mrs. Rawlins with a softened voice. 'Mr. Gurgyle did it the day before he died: it was the last thing he ever drew.'

Matthew was regarding the dreamy blue eyes and the placid mouth of the baby face.

'And so one was fair and the other was dark,' he murmured. 'Mrs. Hunston's little girl had dark eyes, and yours blue.'

He said it with a voice of regret. At first it had seemed that the road to the remedying of the alleged wrong lay in the direction of those two children; but what was the good of going that way only to find it a blind alley; what was the good of assuming that there had been a substitution of one child for the other, and of being informed how to distinguish them by the colour of their eyes, when

in the same breath he was informed that both the children were dead?

'At the time when I was becoming anxious as to the future of myself and my little girl, and was trying to decide what to do, your relative dismissed the servants at the Hall with the intention, as he told me, of taking the other little baby, Amy Hunston, to a place where it would be properly brought up. It was then that he helped me to the means of earning my living; but this means involved my going out with a family to Australia;—and what to do with my little girl? My position in the family I was going to be with made it impossible to take my child with me. Your relative advised me to place it in the care of some trustworthy person, and promised that during my absence he would always give me news of it.'

'And did he recommend any person as being fit for such a trust?'

'No, and I could not bring my mind to the thought of leaving my child to the care of an utter stranger. But your relative was going to London, I knew, from what he said; so I confided to him my father's address there, and asked him to see my helpless child safely carried there: for though I was determined never to go home myself, I knew there were loving hands there ready to cherish a child of mine. Mr. Bagnall consented, and I went to Australia, knowing my baby was in good hands. Not long after I had arrived in Melbourne I received a letter from your uncle, saying that my poor little girl had died suddenly, succumbing, he said, to the black November fog, the day after it was taken to my old home—the day on which the ship I went by had set sail. Your uncle did not inform me sooner, because, as he said, he wished me to have got the journey over, and to have settled down before receiving the bad news.'

'And you say the other little baby, Amy Hunston, also died?'

'Yes; when some years later I saw your uncle he told me it only lived a few years.'

'And have you nothing more to tell me in connection with my relative?'

'Nothing. I have told you everything.'

'But he did not carry the two children to London without assistance,' continued Matthew. 'There were nurses for instance. Can you give me the name and address of any one who accompanied him?'

'No.'

'But you know into whose hands your child was going to be entrusted during the journey?'

'I did; but I cannot give you the address of any one concerned in the removal of the children.'

'Can you give me their names?'

'No.'

And Matthew understood from this that, whether she could or could not give the information desired, she had told all she had intended to tell.

'When Spike referred to this rock sketched here, called "Jacob's Ladder,"' observed Matthew—'I mean that evening at the bar—did he refer to some particular circumstance in connection with the rock?'

'Nothing particular ever happened in connection with it as far as I know.'

Her interrogator had not put the question so much with a view of getting information, as of again reminding her that he knew of one person at least who had a knowledge of Broodley Waters—of warning her that he might question this person, and of giving her an opportunity to prevent any facts personal to herself, and not relevant to the inquiry, from being unnecessarily revealed.

'Spike probably mentioned the name of this rock in particular,' added Matthew, 'as he might have mentioned the name of any other feature of the locality, simply to indicate his knowledge of Broodley Waters without mentioning its name.'

'Probably,' replied Mrs. Rawlins.

'One other question, if you will permit it,' said Matthew, in rising to go. 'Was the birth of your little girl registered in Mr. Gurgoyne's name?'

'Yes.'

This closed the conversation, and in a few moments Matthew was in the streets again, pondering and uncertain which way to go.

Mrs. Rawlins was hastily attiring herself to go out-of-doors.

'Who was that?' inquired Mr. Juniper's mother in the chair. 'I thought he would never go. Surely it isn't anybody turned up with news of my silk scarf?'

Mrs. Rawlins waved her hand, and leaving the house, looked in all directions. Seeing Matthew following one, she immediately followed another—going straight to Mrs. Spike's.

---

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PONDERING and uncertain still, Matthew traversed the length of one street after another, drawn slowly towards his hotel, only by the thought that apparently there was nothing else to do but to go there and wait until the moment came for returning to Thatchley.

Suddenly, however, he quickened his pace, at last under the influence of a motive; then jumped into a cab, and ten minutes afterwards entered a large public building.

What he learned from the records kept there startled him.

The birth of Mrs. Rawlins' little girl, under the name of Fanny Gurgoyne, was, indeed, as he expected to find, registered as having taken place at Broodley Waters in the year marked under the portrait of the child in her dead father's sketch-book.

But her death, which, according to Mrs. Rawlins' narrative,

occurred in the same year, was registered neither in that year nor in any subsequent year.

Amy Hunston's birth was registered as having occurred at Dover, and at a date nearly coincident with that of the other birth. This entry, like the other, was in agreement with Mrs. Rawlins' statement.

But Amy Hunston's death, which, according to Mrs. Rawlins, should not have happened until a few years afterwards, was registered as having happened in the same year with the birth, and in the month of November—that is, at the time when Mrs. Rawlins had stated her child to have died; and further, it was entered as having happened in London, in a street of a certain name, and in a house bearing a certain number, which name and number indicated to Matthew—who had good cause for remembering both name and number—that the house *was no other than that which had been known as the 'Golden Sheaf'*—had been known, but was now no longer known, for its long predicted demolition had been accomplished a few weeks after its occupier's death.

It required an effort on Matthew's part to arrange the thoughts that were now thronging his mind, and to draw a conclusion from them.

Was the 'Golden Sheaf' the 'home' to which Mrs. Rawlins had sent her child, and where 'there were loving hands ready to cherish a child of hers'? and was Harkles Mrs. Rawlins' father? and if so, was Pattie supposed to be—supposed to be, and yet was not, her child?

Was his dead father the author of the wrong which had to be remedied. Had he died guilty of a crime? Matthew recoiled from the thought.

And after all it was not necessary to assume that Mrs. Rawlins was in any way connected with Harkles or the 'Golden Sheaf.' It might well have been that the 'home' she had referred to was not there, and that Matthew's father, after having fulfilled the task which he had undertaken on her behalf, had put up at Harkles' house just as he might have put up at any other place of entertainment for man and beast. Matthew knew that his genial friend the parson was in the habit of stopping there when in town. Why might not the manager of the Broodley estates also have had at one time the same habit? And if he had, it was easy to understand that he had temporarily housed the little heiress to the estates, and her attendants, in the same resting-place with himself, and that there the child had died, without its being necessary to go on to the surmise that Mrs. Rawlins' old home and the 'Golden Sheaf' were one and the same.

But why, he next asked himself, had Mrs. Rawlins stated that the little Amy Hunston had not died until a few years after that event of being carried up to London, while according to the register the child had died in the year of its birth, and at the very time which

Mrs. Rawlins stated to be the time when her own child had died? And again, *why was no record of the death of her child found?* Either Mrs. Rawlins was attempting to deceive Matthew, or his father had deceived her. If the deception had been on his father's part, what had been *the object?* Matthew recoiled again at the thought which presented itself, but none the less did he confront it.

If his father was the author of the wrong referred to, he had at least died attempting to remedy it. The means of making the reparation which the father had intended, it was now the duty of the son to discover and apply.

Again his father's words came back, 'When I am dead and gone, my boy, and all my shame is buried with me.' Again Chipplès' words came back, 'Why seek to revive a shame that will be buried with him?'

And with them came the remembrance of Harkles' sorrowful but forgiving reference to the trouble which had been brought upon him by Pattie's mother, and of Mrs. Parlby's reference to the same subject.

But Mrs. Rawlins' daughter, if it had lived, should have grown up fair with blue eyes, and Pattie was dark, with brown eyes—*like what the little heiress Amy Hunston was described to have been.*

The thought that it was Mrs. Rawlins' child which had died, and that the little heiress who had been registered as dead, had in reality lived, and had been brought up in the other's place—that, in short, the heiress had been despoiled of her interests in the Broodley estates—this thought filled Matthew's mind with a quaking fear of shame. It was necessary to confirm his doubts or to get rid of them at once.

Chipplès, Spike, the latter's wife had all seemed to him to have some knowledge of Mrs. Rawlins. Accordingly he started off in search of them.

On his way he debated the question that arose in his mind as to whether he was right in pursuing his inquiry in a direction which risked the revelation of secrets personal to Mrs. Rawlins. He had asserted before her that there would be no exposure of her private affairs; but he had, at the same time, pointed out to her that his only ground for making this assertion was the statement to that effect contained in the returned letter. If that statement had been made without a due regard to facts, that was not his fault. Again, if a great wrong had been done, it could not be right that any sentimental or other reasons, on the part of Mrs. Rawlins, should bar the way to a redressal. And so forth. In fine, like all persons who commence to debate a question of morality, only after they have positively decided on the line of action in regard to which the question arises, Matthew proved to himself that, in doing what he had determined to do, he was perfectly right. And so, as quickly as possible, he went in quest of Mr. Chipplès, to begin with.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CHIPPLES, who showed the effects of having already indulged himself with a part of the profits of his recent interview with Vasper, appeared to Matthew to shrink before him more than ever, a bad sign, as indicating apprehension and presaging silence.

'Mr. Chipples, do you remember the occasion of my late relative travelling up to London with two infant children under his protection?'

'With two infant children under his protection, Mr. Matthew!'

Now, notwithstanding Mr. Chipples' shrinking, there was such unusual promptness, and so genuine a ring of surprise in this exclamation, that Matthew was instantly disposed to believe that the old copying-clerk did really know nothing about the children.

'You don't remember?'

'No, Mr. Matthew, no, sir. I never knew anything of Mr. Bagnall in connection with children in all the time I knew him, not even in connection with yourself, Mr. Matthew, because, as you know, I have only known you since you have been grown up.'

'You are not speaking now under the influence of Mrs. Rawlins, are you, Mr. Chipples?'

'No, Mr. Matthew, no, sir. I give you my word of—I assure you I am not. But I don't deny that I am under her influence in regard to another matter. I am glad, Mr. Matthew, that I am able to be candid on this point, because I don't like to feel that I am labouring under a suspicion in your mind of insincerity on my part. I will go further, Mr. Matthew, and tell you why I am under the influence of Mrs. Rawlins at all. It is because I am poor, and that I am able to afford her information about the movements of a certain person in whose doings she is interested. As for the incident you have alluded to, Mr. Matthew, I assure you I know nothing at all about it.'

As a matter of fact, this was the real state of things, as will be seen, which was probably the reason why Mr. Chipples spoke with such unusual promptitude and directness. Whether Matthew at the time believed what his old acquaintance had just said, or whether he did not, he felt it useless to appear to doubt it.

The next person sought out was Mrs. Spike.

'Mrs. Spike, do you remember the occasion of my late—of Mr. Bagnall travelling up to London with two infant children under his protection?'

'Why, Mr. Matthy, what can make you think I know anything about it?'

Matthew saw at once that she did know.

'Will you answer my question or not, Mrs. Spike?'

'Why, Mr. Matthy, it's such a queer thing for you to ask me; how should I—'



'You are under the influence of Mrs. Rawlins, I presume?'

'I am only a poor woman, Mr. Matthy, with a 'usband as spends nearly all he earns in drink; and Mrs. Rawlins she's very good to me, besides what she can put into my hands in the way of charing.'

And Matthew knew that if he could give and do more than Mrs. Rawlins, that the poor charwoman would reveal what she was now keeping back; but he did not, therefore, insult her by telling her so.

He was turning round to go, when she arrested him, by saying,—

'Mrs. Parlby, her as was Mrs. Skimflight at the time you are talking about, Mr. Matthy, could tell you about it. That's all I can say, sir.'

All she could say! To Matthew it seemed like a confirmation of all he suspected.

'The indication you have given is a valuable one, Mrs. Spike.'

'Yes, sir, it's more, perhaps, than I ought to have revulged; but when a person's poor, with a 'usband as drinks—'

Yes, that was it; she had sold her word.

Giving her something, Matthew left the house; and remembering how the possession of money, instead of being recognised as the mere means of resisting temptation, is often taken for the virtue of doing so, he reflected that Mrs. Spike's lapse would be condemned by many persons of reputed integrity, only because they could not conceive themselves evading their word for so small a sum as had contented her. Could such persons, he asked himself, conceive of no sum at which they would begin to waver in their integrity? He did not go on to the too hasty conclusion that every man has his price; but he did think that if every one would submit himself to rigorous self-interrogation as to the kind and extent of reward which would induce him to commit this or that fault, there would be many cases in which the result would be a startling revelation of character to one's self—a revelation which need never be breathed aloud, but which might be productive of more good than the constant contemplation of the faults of others.

And as to Mrs. Spike's own conscience, she had this delusive self-justification to comfort herself with: she had revealed nothing herself; she had simply mentioned the name of a person who could, and if that person did, it was that person's own affair.

---

## CHAPTER XL.

By means of a few questions, happily directed, Matthew at last succeeded, at an obscure beer-shop, in coming upon the man in the flannel jacket himself. Mr. Spike being only in a middle stage of intoxication, was in a condition to answer a question intelligibly; but the little beer-shop, with its low ceiling and abundant gas, so reeked with exhalations of tobacco juice and stale porter rising from

its muddy floor, that Matthew postponed his interrogation until he had induced Mrs. Spike's husband to go out with him and stretch his legs a little on the pavement. Once in the open air, Matthew began,—

'Spike, I want to ask you one or two questions.'

'Cert'n'y, sir, as many as you like; and I'll answer straight and without preperation, as I told the blokes to do as swore against me the t'other day when I was up afore the beak.'

'I am sorry to hear you have been in trouble, Spike.'

'Yes, sir, they got up a monstrous allegation and a unconceivable preversion of facts' (Mr. Spike had added a good many words to his vocabulary on the occasion of his brief contact with the law), 'and charged me with being drunk and disorderly. But I repudiated the charge in a style they didn't expect. A little bit *on*, says I, I may have been, and I may have used language; but as for being drunk and disorderly and knocking the constable's hat over his eyes, why, it's nothing else, says I, but fragrant lies, if not rank perjury.'

'And what was the result, Spike?'

'What was the result, sir? Why, in argufying the matter, I completely smashed 'em all; they hadn't a leg to stand on, neither the beak nor the constable, nor none of 'em; I won the case easy, and then out o' spite they turned round and fined me twenty shillings and the costs. That's the way they treated a poor man!'

Mr. Spike might have said that that was the way they treated a poor woman, for it was his wife upon whom the burden of finding the money fell.

'Well now, Spike, I want you to answer one or two questions,' resumed Matthew.

'All right, sir, I'm ready; I always am ready to do anythink for an old acquaintance; and now as young Richard is down there with you, it seems as if there was quite a family tie between us. And how is young Richard, sir?—a-growin' and a-blowin' and a-thrivin' all alone by hisself, and never a-thinkin' of sendin' the price of a pint o' beer or a screw o' bacca to his poor father?'

'Your son is quite well, Spike, more robust even than when he was in town—the country air evidently agrees with him. And I find him very useful.'

'Oh yes, sir, young Richard's all that; he's useful, and he's active, and he knows what he's about—he takes after his father there; and I will say he's very good to his mother, and his young brother and sister.'

'I thought so, Spike.'

'Oh yes, sir, he's all that. But what I say is this; you've got to keep young Richard down; when a boy puts on high airs with his own father, because his 'ard-working parent now and then goes round the corner to smoke a quiet pipe just for a little change, why,

I say it's high time then for the father, even if he do sometimes take a drop too much, to stand up—'

'If he can,' thought Matthew.

'To stand up,' said Mr. Spike, stopping to do so very straight indeed, 'and declare his strong objections to being cheeked. That's all, sir; keep young Richard down, sir, and he'll be a credit to everybody concerned; and I will say he's very good to his mother and his brother and sister; he ain't forgot *them*, though he is a long way off from *them*.'

'I'm glad to hear it, Spike. But now to begin again: do you recollect the occasion of Mr. Bagnall travelling up to London with two children under his protection—a long time ago?'

'A long time ago?' repeated Mr. Spike, again stopping to steady himself. 'Why, yes, it's twenty year and more ago. Do I recollect? Why, wasn't my missis one of the party?—and wasn't I one of the party?'

At last!

'Do I recollect?' continued Mr. Spike. 'Why, what's twenty year ago to me—with a mem'ry like mine? What's thirty—what's forty?—what's—well'—summed up Mr. Spike suddenly, for it here occurred to him that he wasn't born fifty years ago; 'it's all the same thing to me, with my memory. What I sees and hears and knows of I remembers, and never forgets. Just you ask me when what's-his-name—the name's on the tip o' my tongue—well, him as committed the what-d'ye-call-it murder—blest if that name isn't gone too for the minute!—well, just you ask me what year he was hung in, and see if I don't give it correct. I don't want none o' your history books; I carries it all in my head, I do.'

'Can you name any one else who accompanied the children on that journey, Spike?'

'Can I? course I can;—but look here, sir, look here, guv'nor—'

'Yes.'

'Now I ain't a avaricious bloke. I ain't one o' them greedy coves as won't do nothin' for nobody without bein' paid for it; but I know a gen'l'm'n like you, sir, wouldn't like to feel hisself under a obligation to a poor man like me; so now, if you was a-thinkin' of invitin' me to accept a trifle to drink your health with, sir, why, you needn't hold back for fear of offendin' me, sir. I sha'n't be offended, guv'nor.'

'All right, Spike; then there you are.'

'Thank you, sir,' replied Spike, moistening the coin for the sake of luck. 'I knew you didn't need reminding of what a gen'l'm'n should do in such a case. Well now, guv'nor, you was a-askin' who else was with the party. I'm goin' to tell you all about it. First, there was Mr. Bagnall hisself, wasn't there?'

'Of course.'

'Well, *of course*, if you like, guv'nor; all I says is he was there.'

'Yes, yes, Spike.'

'Well, then there was my missis; she was in charge of one young un—the one belonging to Mrs. Rawlins, as she calls herself; and then there was me a-takin' care o' my missis; and then,' continued Mr. Spike very slowly, 'and then there was two others, d'ye see?'

'Having charge of the other child?'

'I didn't say so, guv'nor,' objected Mr. Spike, who was beginning to entertain the idea that he was parting with valuable information too cheaply. 'Howsumever one of 'em, the woman, *had* charge of the other young un—the young un from Broodley Hall, d'ye see; and the other, the man, was a-takin' care of his mother, the woman; just as I was a-takin' care o' my missis, who had charge of Mrs. Rawlins' young un, d'ye see.'

'And this other man, and this other woman, who were they?'

'Who was they?' repeated Mr. Spike, reflectively, and trying in vain to find an excuse for longer withholding the information.

'Blest if ever I was under such a cross-examination afore! Well then, guv'nor, if you must know, the other man was—who'd you ever think it was, guv'nor, of all people in the world?'

'I'm waiting to hear you say who it was, Spike.'

'Well, then, if I *must* tell you,' said Spike desperately, 'it was Juniper of the "*Rest*,"'

'Juniper of the "*Pilgrims' Rest*"! and the woman in charge of Mrs. Hunston's child was his mother!'

'Yes, the old woman, as they calls her,' replied Spike; 'her as sits propped up with pillows and hardly ever gets out of her chair.'

Mrs. Rawlins, Spike, his wife, Juniper, Juniper's mother. Five witnesses!

'And what became of the children, Spike?'

'When we got to London, they was give up at the station.'

'To whom?'

'Well, now, look here, guv'nor: how long is this pumpin' business goin' to last? Oh, well,' exclaimed Mr. Spike, moistening another coin which Matthew handed him in reply, 'if any one acts like a gen'l'm'n with me, I'm always willin' to oblige him. Well now, sir, d'ye see, the two young uns as soon as ever we got to London, was passed into the hands of a lady as was waitin' there for 'em with a couple of servants. From that day to this I've never set eyes on the young uns. Mr. Bagnall a long time after that told my missis that they was both on 'em dead.'

'But the lady at the station who received the children, have you never seen her again?—didn't you know her name?'

'I didn't know her name then, guv'nor; but I have knowed it since, and I have seen her since. Some time after the night when I had first met her at the station, I took to going—for me and my missis settled on stoppin' in London, worse luck!—I took to going now and then to the "*Golden Sheaf*," and there one night, lo and behold! I see her. I know'd her in a minute; for I'd taken very particular note of her timepiece at the station, 'cause she'd taken

particular note o' me, and I'd carried some things for her to the cab—though Mr. Bagnall seemed mortal afraid of my going near her—and she smiled very sweet on me, and tipped me very handsome. When I see her at the "Sheaf" first, she was called Mrs. Skimflight. She married again, I suppose, 'cause now she's called Mrs. Parlyb.'

Witness number six!

'When you first saw her at the "Golden Sheaf," Spike, did you not ask her anything about the children?'

'No, guv'nor, 'cause she never came into the bar. I only see her across the bar a-sittin' in the room where the old un used to sit—you remember.'

Matthew did remember very well indeed.

'So,' continued Spike, 'it would have been imperlite for me to have gone a-shoutin' delicate questions to her across a public bar into a private back parlour; and when me and my missis did have an opportunity of parley-wooin' with her, we'd already heard from Mr. Bagnall as the young uns was dead; so the missis she said it wouldn't be respect'ful to make allusions to such painful subjects. Well, that's about all as—but I must be off; remember me kindly to young Richard, and good-night, guv'nor.'

---

## CHAPTER XLI.

WHILE Matthew, surprised by this abrupt breaking off, was peering, by the aid of the dimly-burning lamps, after the form of the man in the flannel jacket as it was quickly vanishing into the misty obscurity of the closing day—it was now September—he felt a light touch on his arm. Turning round he saw the cause of Mr. Spike's hasty retirement.

'You have forestalled me with that one,' said Mrs. Rawlins, with a chill smile. 'I don't conceal from you that I have been searching for him. I am too late.'

'He has told me, Mrs. Rawlins, into whose hands the two children passed. Had you told him to keep that a secret?'

'No; I had not done so yet; but I was looking for him for the purpose of doing so. What I *had* already told him was, never to mention to any one my existence in connection with Broodley Waters.'

It at once occurred to Matthew that there was some strong motive for this unusual communicativeness on her part.

'With the clue you are now in possession of,' she resumed, 'you are likely to come upon the discovery of who I really am. I ask of you, as a great favour, never to mention the fact of your having seen me, or of my being still alive. I have a particular reason for desiring that those who formerly knew me should believe me to be dead. Will you promise to keep my secret? If you make the promise, I know from your face you will keep it.'

'I cannot give you an unconditional promise, Mrs. Rawlins. I can only promise to keep your secret in the event of its not being absolutely necessary to reveal it for the remedy of the wrong I am inquiring into.'

'I cannot possibly imagine any wrong,' said Mrs. Rawlins, 'in rectifying which the discovery of my being alive could be involved.'

'I can ; and it is only fair to warn you that there is a possibility—a probability even—that you may be called upon to give evidence in a court of law.'

'I am perfectly sure you are mistaken,' replied Mrs. Rawlins. 'As far as I know, I have never had the remotest connection with any wrong that could possibly lead to such an event. Besides, this wrong, whatever it may be, has aroused the attention of another person.'

'Indeed !—may I ask who this other person is ?'

'I don't see any reason for telling you,' replied Mrs. Rawlins, who had no other cause for withholding the information than a vague fear that in giving it she might in some manner hasten the dragging into light of her own secret. 'Well, I was going to say that this person, who seems to me, if you will excuse the expression, to be on the same wild-goose chase as yourself, has assured me that I need not have the slightest apprehension of my existence becoming known in quarters where I wish to be thought of as dead. Therefore, in making the promise, you need have no fear that you may have to break it.'

'I make it, subject, however, to the condition I named. But, Mrs. Rawlins, you are asking me to guard a secret—if, always understood, I chance to discover it—which two other people, Spike and his wife, are already in possession of. I am not going to express any doubt about their trustworthiness, only bear in mind—'

'They are not in possession of it,' interposed Mrs. Rawlins. 'They have no knowledge, no suspicion of who I really am ; but they know the circumstances attending my residence at Broodley Waters, and if by hazard they were to allude to these circumstances in the presence of certain persons who formerly knew me—and I know that both of them have already been in contact with some of these persons—it might lead to the discovery of my secret. All that I am dependent on Spike and his wife for, is that they should keep a silent tongue about my residence at Broodley.'

'But your position in a house open to all the public—'

'As far as the persons I am speaking of are concerned, it is just as though I were at the other end of the world. Not one of them is ever likely to penetrate into that street, much less to enter such a house.'

'And yet,' observed Matthew, recalling a certain evening months before, 'I recollect that one night, the profile of a certain person being shadowed on what is called a frosted glass panel, you started

at the sight of it as if you had recognised a likeness to some one whom you little expected to find so near.'

'I remember; but it was only a momentary fear. It was not the person I thought of. I made a mistake.'

'If the person you thought of is named Peevers—a man who professes to uphold the cause of temperance—if that was the man you thought of, Mrs. Rawlins, you made no mistake.'

'You know that man?'

'Yes.'

'It was impossible that he could have been there, that he could have seen me! If he had, he would certainly have informed some one who would not have allowed an hour to elapse without letting me know of the discovery.'

'As a matter of fact,' said Matthew, 'I don't think he did see you; but he was there, and I rather think the person with him saw you.'

'Ah, that's it!' uttered Mrs. Rawlins, with a sigh of relief. 'I understand now. The person with him was a dark man, with a beard all over his face.'

'Exactly.'

'Peevers had known Juniper and his mother at Broodley—before I lived there—and he was simply pointing out to the person with him where he lived. This, it is true, led, through want of caution on the part of Mrs. Juniper during my absence, to the discovery of my existence by the other person; but this person assured me, and it appeared to me with good reason, that it was not necessary at all for the success of his inquiry that the fact of my being still alive should be revealed.'

Thus, then, as she had suspected, the person whom she had referred to as being on 'the same wild-goose chase' as Matthew himself, was Vasper. No time, then, was to be lost. Matthew, after a reiteration of his conditional promise to Mrs. Rawlins, took leave of her without further delay.

It happened that, in talking, they had unconsciously strolled in the direction of Mr. Raymond Filps's house, and that they had separated precisely opposite to that person's door. As Mr. Filps at this moment chanced to come out on to his front-door steps, to see 'how much longer that gal,' whom he had sent in hot haste to find a cab, 'was going to be,' it again occurred that he saw Matthew and Mrs. Rawlins talking together in the street.

'Oh, don't mind me,' he soliloquised, as the other two gradually receded into the mist; 'don't be on ceremony with me, Matthew Bernock, Esquire! and, besides, I'm a-looking another way, I am, and I don't want to pry into nobody's affairs, I don't: only perhaps I *may* know a thing or two more than you give me credit for. Old Coppernose—what's he call himself?—that old Chipples fellow, he's let me into a *nice* little secret! If I know how much two and two make, Mrs. Rawlins is Mr. Matthew Bernock's wife, and she's a good *ten* years older than he is. And so she has to serve behind

a bar, has she?—while my lord swaggers about and passes himself off as a single, unmarried bachelor—eh? Well, I'll just introduce myself to Mrs. Rawlins' notice, and then, if I don't manage to change my gentleman's fine airs!—But I wonder when that gal's a comin' with that cab? Blest if I think I'll go now, after all! I've got three cabs charged to that same affair already to-day. But isn't this Bernock-Rawlins business a treat? I fancy I can see his face when I tell him I have found it all out!'

And Mr. Raymond Filps, not knowing that he was on the wrong scent, was just as much elated as if he had been on the right one.

---

## CHAPTER XLII.

MATTHEW, unconscious of the apostrophe to which he had just given rise, with a bounding heart and a bounding step, sped on. He suddenly asked himself—whither? To his hotel—for nothing, he persuaded himself, could be gained by taking the train before morning—to his hotel to dine by himself, in the worse than solitude of a public dining-room? It was a dangerous moment for him.

It was a moment when his mind was filled with a pleasing sense of something accomplished, of an important victory won, when his appetites, unjaded by excess, were moved with a lusty craving, when a tingling of pleasure gained generated a desire for its increase; a moment more dangerous even than when the mind, racked with the after-pains of a drunken debauch, in turning for re-invigoration to its poison, does so with the sickening horror of it that a blistered lining of the stomach gives.

He thought of that night when, wearied with fruitless efforts to find employment, and almost on the point of leaving England, he had turned into the 'Pilgrims' Rest.' What he saw and heard there had so stirred up his interest that he had gone again, and still again, postponing his journey from day to day, until, one fine morning, there came so unexpectedly Mr. Maybright's letter offering the place at Thatchley. Thus he was brought into contact with Vasper, who, by his display of curiosity about the returned letter, had set this inquiry going. How little he had foreseen to what the apparently unimportant step of turning into that reeking tavern was to lead!

Pattie was going to be made rich, and the discovery of her wealth was due to him. Kate would now see that his love was not the sordid one she had been induced to believe it. Having established Pattie in her possessions, he would turn round to the moneyless Kate and renew his offer of marriage. No; he would do it now by letter before he had again seen Pattie, so that there might be no suspicion that he had offered himself to the latter and had been rejected by her. The letter would not reach Kate before he saw



her; but the postmark on it would show how swiftly following on the discovery he had penned it.

This letter being written and put into the post, he again considered the question of what to do with himself for the evening. Yes, he was pleased, and it was the moment to have a cheery friend or two about him.

True, there was an ugly thought every now and then recurring in his mind. Had his father been guilty of deliberately thrusting Pattie from her place, of turning her away from her inheritance? Perhaps not; perhaps there had been nothing worse than a mistake, the result of ignorance or carelessness. He was going to hope so.

Yes, on the whole, he was certainly pleased; and so the idea took him of going to find certain jovial spirits he knew of, and to get them to eat, drink, and make merry with him.

---

### CHAPTER XLIII.

THE next morning it seemed to Matthew that an ugly spider had fixed its claws into the roof of his brain; and his mind was a prey to the stings of a morbid concentration of thought upon his own words and acts of the past night. One of the chief grounds for self-reproach, the fact that in not preventing himself from getting drunk, he had run the risk of causing danger to himself and to others, entered but little into his reflections. For the moment he pondered not on what he ought to think of himself, but what others were thinking of him; and not what they thought of him in regard to the self-debasement to which he had descended, but what they thought of him in regard to what he had said and done. Indistinct recollections of foolish utterances, and still more foolish performances, crowded his mind.

Shadowy recollections of familiar and emotional conversation held with persons whom he had never in his life seen before; of confidential outpourings into the ears of those with whom his acquaintance was a web of the thinnest texture; of an uncalled-for open and unstinted expression of contempt for the characteristic qualities of one acquaintance present, and of an equally uncalled-for open and unstinted expression of admiration for the opposite qualities of another present—in each case to the face of the person concerned; of all manner of impertinent familiarities dropped into with all manner of people—in the ferment of his brain all these recollections kept wavering, working him to that point of nervous shame that, when he left the shelter of his room, it was with a shrinking fear of encountering some one who had heard or seen him overnight. He shunned the dawn, and wished the day had tarried until he had got himself miles away.

It belongs to the egoism of mankind that one individual should

think his own acts and words are occupying the mind of others as much as the mind of himself; and in a brain enduring the after effects of alcohol, before recourse has been had to further stimulation, this quality of egoism brings on a state of mind not easily marked off from the outward confines of insanity.

He hurried off to the railway station, and for the moment had no difficulty in doing without an accompaniment of brandy with the cup of coffee which he greedily swallowed there. Brandy would only aggravate his thirst, and, besides, he was going to get sober for his interview with Mrs. Parlbay; as to which there must be no delay—no delay.

In the train confused recollections of the night still came thronging to his labouring mind. What were those promises he had made, and to so many people? They were promises, surely, which involved the supposition that he was going to have an uncontrolled power of management over the possessions into which Pattie was about to come? Reverting to the latter part of the preceding day, when the discovery had already been made, and while he was yet sober, he had to confess to himself that his thoughts had indeed for a few minutes dwelt upon the possibility of his being kept on in the agency of the Thatchley estates.

And the puny germ contained in this possibility had, under the artificial heat of drunkenness, expanded with unnaturally prodigious growth into the delusion that he was the all-dispensing ruler of the ancient domain of Thatchley; with its woods and its commons, its parsonage houses and its glebe lands, its mills and its streams, its green lanes and its duck ponds, its fatness and its poverty, its crowded cottages and its noisome wells, its cesspools and its fevers, and all other its appurtenances handed down from the not wholly bad old times. In respect of the good of all this he had made promises with the prodigality of a beggar's blessing; and his real position was this, that he had retired from the management of the property, and therefore had no control over the disposal of so much even as a rotten stick upon it!

The exaggerated sense of humiliation which such thoughts as these brought with them in acting upon a mind left morbid by the retreating fumes of drink, joined to the physical weakness caused by the want of solid food, reduced him, by the time the train arrived at Carborough, to a condition which he knew was the natural punishment of the previous night's self-abandonment.

He could not eat, and meanwhile he thought he required something to steady him for the coming revelation of what he had discovered; so, while they were getting a conveyance ready for him at the 'Boar's Head' (where, fortunately, the tradesman with the five shop fronts, and the young lawyer and the sporting doctor, and the military judge of wines, and the other notabilities of the place were not yet gathered), he called for some brandy and water; and as he was determined not to go beyond one glass, he ordered it to be

made of the strength of two. That was to keep him up until he reached Thatchley, where, after a ten miles' drive through the clear country air, he would be able to eat some luncheon, and so recover himself.

It was long past midday already, and when he got down at Thatchley four o'clock was sounding from the old church clock. The air had done him good, but he still felt at a low ebb, so as a sort of stay until a chop could be grilled for him, and to lighten the trouble of taking a hasty bath, and because he was thirsty and, in the heated condition he was in, did not care to swallow a large draught of water with no corrective after it—therefore, he took another glass of brandy.

---

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

HAVING nearly finished his hurried toilette, he called Richard, who, while polishing up some article of horse furniture, had been hovering about at the foot of the staircase in expectation of being required.

'Richard, I want you to—but, by the way, I saw your father in London, and he desired to be kindly remembered to you—I want you to run round and ask if Mrs. Parlby is at home, and if so at what hour she can see me.'

'It's no use going, sir, because I know she isn't in,' replied Richard, not ceasing to polish.

'What makes you think so?'

'Because she's up at the Summer-House on Fir Tree Hill, having what they call afternoon tea—that's what she's doing—with the others.'

'With whom do you mean?'

'Why, there's the Young Un and there's the t'other Young Un—'

'Miss Kate and Miss Pattie?'

'Yes, and then there's the Old Un—'

'Mrs. Parlby?'

'Yes, and then there's the Rev'rend Gent and his Cove—'

'How often must I tell you to say Mr. Maybright and Mr. Gregory Gurgoyle? A pretty idea to call the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle a Cove!'

'And there's—not him but the t'other one—'

'Mr. Jack Gurgoyle?'

'Yes, and then there's the two blokes from London.'

'Mr. Chamfer and Mr. Stopp? But how do *you* come to know the list of the party?'

'Why, it's Mrs. Parlby who gives the entertainment; and the two Young Uns, they came and asked me if I could lend a hand

in carrying up the things, and I said yes ; but I must be back soon in case you come by this train, which you did.'

'So you helped them?'

'Yes, and I stopped to do the waiting, just to have a chance of seeing and hearing what they was all a-doin' of a-drinkin' tea like that in a out-o'-the-way unused place on the top of a hill, when they could have done it more comfortable at home in a civilised room.'

'And are they up there now, do you think?'

'I reckon so ; when I came away they was still at it, 'specially the temp'rance cove.'

'What ! Mr. Peevers ? Is he down here?'

'Yes, on a visit to Mrs. Parlbay and the two Young Uns, so he says. You should have heard him a-hollering for the cream and the butter, and the cake, and me a-helpin' everybody else all round afore him, and him a-sayin' what a pity there was no cold beef and pickles, 'cause there was many worse things than a cut off a piece of cold beef, if it was tender and the gravy not cooked out of it, with pickles, which tea and bread and butter wasn't much without it ; and the Big Boss—'

'Mr. Vasper ? He is come back, then?'

'Yes, he came back last night ever so late ; and the Big Boss, he says yes, he should think cold beef and pickles between lunch and dinner was a out-and-out good thing for the appetite, 'specially if you took enough of it, and the temp'rance cove he couldn't see he was being chaffed.'

'Well now, Richard, I'm going downstairs to eat a chop, and at the same time you can put the grey to and get ready to go with me to Fir Tree Hill : I want to see Mrs. Parlbay at once.'

Having spoilt his appetite with several doses of brandy on an empty stomach, he made a very poor lunch ; which was an obvious excuse for taking more brandy before starting.

The two being once on the road behind the grey horse, Richard began,—

'You haven't heard what's goin' about, sir?'

'What's that, Richard?'

'That the parson—the Old Un—'

'Mr. Maybright.'

'Is going to marry the Young Un's aunt.'

'Mrs. Parlbay ? And what does Thatchley say about it?'

'In gen'ral they don't mind it, but the t'other parson cove—'

'Mr. Gregory Gurgyle.'

'He don't like it. I overheard him this morning—just accidental like, as he and the grocer's missis met against the harness-room window, and I left off rubbing to hear what she'd have to say about them candles in church—which her old man says as long as they patronise the local tradesman there's no harm in it—and she says, What do you think, she says, about this unheard-of match between Mr. M. and Mrs. P.—and the young parson cove, he says it would

be a unholy union, and she says, the idea, she says, of a lawfully certified somethin' of the somethin' church—I couldn't catch it exactly, but she meant he was a regular church parson—agoin' to marry with a woman that went to a meeting-house, and every Sunday sat under nothing but a journeyman cabinet-maker what had got pitchforked into a pulpit, nobody knows how; why, it's downright sinful, she says, and the young parson cove he says, yes, he must fight against the bad effects of such a act, and he says it's on'y one more reason, he says, for diligently enforcing the use of cymbals, and their meaning, he says, which I thought cymbals,' pursued Richard, 'hadn't no meaning without a drum—'

'Sym-bols,' corrected Matthew; 's-y-m, sym, b-o-l-s, bols—symbols.'

'Which I thought,' resumed Richard, 'cymbals hadn't no meaning without a drum, and if he wants a drum, why not flags and banners, and if flags and banners, why not have a procession, like club feasts do?'

'That's just what he *would* like to have, Richard.'

'Lor'!' cried Richard, 'I never thought such a serious-looking gent would be took by a walking-show like that! Why don't he join the Oddfellows or the Foresters?'

'If he did, Richard, he would insist on being one of the central figures in their shows. Gentlemen of Mr. Gregory Gurgoyle's turn of sentiment,' continued Matthew as much to himself as to his companion, 'are in the main moved by the same passion as professed play-actors—an insatiable desire to be seen and heard in striking situations by as large a concourse of people as possible.'

'And what's your opinion about the match, sir?'

'My opinion won't count for much in the matter, Richard, but I should regard it as a capital match.'

'Yes, I thought so, sir: I could always see you and she got on well together. Oh, and so you saw my bloke, did you, sir, when you was up there?—and how's he a-lookin'?''

'Your father was looking, I thought, about the same, Richard.'

'And that isn't saying much for him. It's the drink; that's what does *him* up. I always think, when a man goes and gets drunk, it's just as though as if he went to a doctor and got hisself turned into one o' them poor lunatic idjots as can't do nothin' but laugh when you speaks to 'em, and it's worse, because a man as does that often gets up to mischief, whereas them poor things are often harmless.'

'Quite true, Richard.'

And Matthew thought that Richard's remark was not less applicable to himself than to Mr. Spike: he felt also that this boy of sixteen years or so was lecturing him.

'There they are,' observed Richard presently, 'over there; d'ye see 'em, along by them beeches?'

'Yes; let me see, who is there in that party of them? I can see the two.'

'They're all there except the Young Uns' aunt,' said Richard, whose eyesight was unimpaired by either drinking or smoking. 'She's resting herself, I suppose, in the summer-house, while the others are amusing themselves out-o'-doors. I heard her say she was tired.'

'I daresay you are right, Richard.'

And leaving the trap in charge of his youthful groom, under the shade of a quiet corner, he set himself to mounting towards the large clump of fir-trees, amidst the resinous scent of which the summer-house had been built.

He remembered with what pains and dexterity his design for this fanciful erection had been brought in an un mutilated form under the eyes of the squire by Jack Gurgyle, to the great discomfiture of Mr. Chamfer, and more especially, of that systematic mutilator, Mr. Stopp; and there came back to him a remark of Vasper's, heard through the open door, 'You must look to your laurels, Chamfer, or this Mr. Bernock will supplant you;' and with it, Chamfer's consequent observation, 'He is just as likely to supplant yourself, sir.' And now, sure enough, it was come true, and he was actually on the point of supplanting Vasper—not indeed in his own person, but in the person of Pattie—supplanting him nevertheless.

## CHAPTER XLV.

WHEN he stood under the verandah and before the principal door of the Summer-House, Mrs. Parlbv, shading her eyes with her hand held up to the western sun, cried,—

'Ah! this *is* kind of you, Mr. Mat, to come and join my little party in spite of being fatigued with your journey. What a pity that we have now hardly anything left to offer you! But I will soon—'

'No, no, don't get up, I beg,' said Matthew, shaking hands with her as she sat; 'I have just this moment had some lunch; and, besides, I have something important to tell you which should be told at once.'

'Indeed! not bad news, I trust?'

'On the contrary, very good, astoundingly good.'

For a moment his thoughts turned on the rumoured marriage, but reflecting that he ought not to venture on the bare authority of Richard's uncorroborated statement, to congratulate her, he plunged straightway into Pattie's affair.

As he did so his eyes turned in the direction of that part of the view where Pattie was moving. The others appeared to surround her, and all were now approaching the Summer-House.

As their lengthening shadows, cast by the declining sun, stretched nearer and nearer, Matthew thought he could distinguish, above a confusion of voices, the excited tones of Mr. Peevers and the Reverend Gregory Gurgyle. Both these gentlemen were sawing the air with upraised arms.

'Mrs. Parlby,' began Matthew, 'many years ago you received into your care, at a railway station in London, two infant children.'

The lady turned her eyes upon him in astonishment, and without a word.

'The name of one was Amy Hunston, and of the other Fanny Gurgyle; the latter the grandchild of the late Mr. Harkles.'

'Yes.'

Mrs. Parlby sighed the word rather than articulated it.

'One of them died—'

'Yes, poor little thing!—it died three days after arriving at the "Golden Sheaf."'

'It was there that both children were housed?'

'Yes; it was the natural home for my poor niece's child; and as for the other little one, the gentleman who brought it from the country—'

'Mr. Bagnall.'

'You know him, then?'

'Yes. *I did* know him; he is dead now. He was a relative of mine.'

'Of yours? How strange! Well, Mr. Bagnall was in the habit in those days of putting up at the "Golden Sheaf," when his stay in town was only for a few days, so I undertook the charge of both the children until he should have further provided for the little Amy Hunston. Contrary to his usual custom, on that occasion he did not come directly to the "Sheaf"; he did not present himself there until three days afterwards, when the poor little invalid—I think it must have taken the seeds of its complaint during the cold railway journey—was on the point of death.'

The lengthening shadows were drawing nearer, and the voices from below growing more distinct—Pattie's rising and falling with a joyous ring.

'The child which died, you say, was Amy Hunston?'

'Yes. But that reminds me of an odd incident in the affair. In the hurry at the station, Mr.—'

'Bagnall—'

'Mr. Bagnall, in the hurry and bustle at the station, omitted to say which of the two children was our little relative, Fanny Gurgyle; so, until he came to the "Sheaf," we had to draw our own conclusion. One, the little one who died, had over its head and shoulders a large silk scarf, marked,—and beyond this, strange to say, there was no other article bearing a mark amongst either one or other of the children's things; well, a large silk handkerchief, marked, as I was going to say, with a curious name—'

'The name of Juniper?' interposed Matthew. 'The name of the

servant from Broodley Waters, who, accompanied by her son, the present landlord of a public-house called the "Pilgrims' Rest," had charge of the little Amy Hunston until the charge was transferred to one of the persons whom you took with you to the station.'

'Exactly. But we thought, in Mr. Bagnall's absence, that it was the name of the little strange girl, and so we took the other for *our* little cherub; but my poor brother, Mr. Harkles, would not let us call it Fanny, because it would have reminded him too frequently of the little one's mother, his daughter, and my poor, dear unfortunate niece—*her* name was Fanny.'

For a moment tears came into the gentle lady's eyes, and Matthew turned his gaze outwards over the green surface of the earth sloping gently down to a wide-spread valley, which, shaded with clumps of beech and oak and birch and yew, was bounded on the other side by a long, dark bank of billowy elms. Pattie and her party were now within the far-stretched shade of the fir trees clustering round the Summer-House.

'Well, when Mr. Bagnall came,' resumed the lady, 'he told us that the little child's name was Amy Hunston, and that the handkerchief must belong to the person who had had the care of the infant in the train. I remember he said he did not know the whereabouts of this person, as she had not gone back to her old place of abode; so it happens that I have this handkerchief in my possession to this day. I would never allow it to be given away, thinking that it might at some time be claimed.'

'Did Mr. Bagnall expressly state that the little child who died was Amy Hunston?'

'No; but he did not question our assumption—but, Mr. Mat, you surely do not mean to suggest any doubt about that?'

'My dear Mrs. Parlby, you must prepare yourself to hear something that will startle you.'

Pattie and the others were drawing very near now, so he hastened his words.

'The child with blue eyes who died,' he said, 'was your niece's, and the child with dark eyes who lived is Amy Hunston, and the owner of these and the Broodley Water estates.'

'Mr. Mat!'

'I have absolute proof of it. As for the silk scarf marked with the name Juniper, its owner must have lent it to the person in temporary charge of Fanny Gurgoyle.'

'Then you say that Mr. Bagnall was deceived like ourselves?—in fact, that we unconsciously led him into the same mistake into which the silk scarf had led us?'

That was just the question which had an ugly appearance for Matthew. Even if it was true that his father had fallen into a mistake, as suggested by Mrs. Parlby, that he believed the child who died to be Amy Hunston, why, when, therefore, necessarily believing the surviving child to be Fanny Gurgoyle, had he sought



to deceive Mrs. Rawlins (as she called herself) in telling her that her child was dead?

But further inward discussion of this kind was cut short by Mrs. Parlbby, who, rising excitedly, called,—

‘Pattie! Kate!’

The party outside were already on the platform of the verandah—Pattie first.

‘Here is Mr. Mat,’ began Mrs. Parlbby, ‘who has brought the most extraordinary—’

‘*News to you*, auntie, but not to us,’ interposed Pattie. ‘*We* know it already; Mr. Vasper has told us all about it.’

Exactly. Vasper, believing that Matthew had stumbled on the track which had hitherto been kept secret, determined to anticipate a dangerous rival by uncovering with his own hands what could not be hidden. While Matthew had been lingering and getting drunk, Vasper had made up his mind and acted.

‘Isn’t it generous of Mr. Vasper,’ cried Pattie, ‘to be the first to reveal the truth when it involves such a sacrifice of his own interests?’

‘Well,’ said Matthew, walking up to Pattie, and bowing to her, ‘although I am too late to be the first to reveal the discovery, I am, in any case, in time to congratulate you, Miss Hunston.’

‘Me!’ exclaimed Pattie. ‘Why, *I’m* not the heiress—that is Amy Hunston there!’

And she pointed to Kate, who, leaning on the arm of Vasper, was regarding Matthew with a look in which pity was mingled with amusement.

Vasper covered him with eyes of derision and hate.

‘Haw—haw—haw!’ roared the advocate of temperance, Mr. Peevers.

‘Hah—hah—hah!’ cackled the eminent architect, Mr. Chamfer.

‘Er—er—er!’ gulped his Creature and Master, Mr. Stopp.

‘He—he—he!’ breathed the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle, who could not forgive Matthew for having persisted in maintaining an air of tolerant indifference in regard to the all-important question of those candles on the altar. The youthful ecclesiastic would have preferred active hostility to indifference, the latter feeling seeming to him to carry with it a something of contempt.

‘Well, I’ll be hanged if I ever heard or saw the like of it!’ gasped Mr. Peevers. ‘When he thought Kate—that is Kate as was—had come in for a pot o’ money from the old man, he went and proposed to her; and now, when he thinks that Pattie has tumbled into all this property, he’s a-beginnin’ to make up to *her* already! And it ain’t Pattie after all!—it’s Kate!—that’s the joke! Haw—haw—haw! Haw!’

And Mr. Chamfer, and Mr. Stopp, and the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle again joined in this hilarity; so that the party seemed to be turning out quite a merry one—for some of them.

It is true the others—Mr. Maybright, Jack Gurgoyle, and the three ladies—expressed as much deprecation of this hilarity as could be conveyed in looks.

Matthew, notwithstanding the well-guarded calm of his exterior, was suffering from a thunderbolt of disappointment. He had thought that it was Pattie who was going to be rich, and that, in turning his back on her wealth to offer his hand to the penniless Kate, his sincerity would be re-established in the latter's eyes. The husband of Kate, and the friend of Pattie—that is what he had for the last twenty-four hours felt himself nearly sure of becoming. He had anticipated almost as a certainty that he was going to be restored to the companionship of those two women whom he knew so well—whom he thought he knew so well.

The truth was, that he knew very little about them—the mere outside of their characters only—all beneath that he had yet to learn.

With unspoken sympathy, Jack Gurgoyle accompanied Matthew, when the latter, having made his excuses to Mrs. Parlbay for leaving, went back to the gig, and drove home again. Jack himself stood in great need of sympathy. His suit for the hand of Pattie had so far met with very little success.

'She seems to be ignorant of my intentions,' he murmured to Matthew; 'otherwise she is pretending to be so in shutting her eyes to them; they are evident enough, I am sure—in fact, it seems to me they're known to all the world except her.'

Matthew gave all the sympathy his own mental state would admit of—and something else, which for the moment was much easier to give: a copious dinner—in which the dish was not taxed so much as the cup.

Matthew having begun the day with brandy, finished with it, and not only finished the day with it, but entered upon the night with it.

So this, the second book, ends as the first began—with the Chief Person of the Story drunk.

*The end of Part II.*

---

## PART III.

### CHAPTER I.

'MR. BERNOCK,' said Kate, making up a bunch of flowers which she had just gathered in the garden, 'I sent word to ask you to call this morning, because I want your advice in a very serious business we are discussing—a thorough examination and improvement of the cottage property.'

The Hall being still unfinished, it had been arranged that she should continue for the present to live not only under the protection, but also under the roof of Mrs. Parlby. So the sunny apartment she was now sitting in was a room in the 'Cottage'—as it was affectedly called, for it had five or six good bedrooms and a stable and coach-house.

'The cottages in Brickfield Lane,' replied Matthew, 'certainly want overhauling, and some skilful plan should be devised for draining the land thereabouts; but I fear the estate is already doing as much as it can for the present in the way of improvements. It will hardly bear a larger outlay.'

'What are our engagements?'

'Well, as regards the Hall, though there was a building fund saved up for that, yet the balance left falls short some two thousand pounds of the total of the amounts which the builder has still to draw, and the extra works performed beyond the contract will certainly tell up to a good three thousand.'

'Well, that makes five thousand.'

'Then there are the two new sets of farm buildings which you are putting up with your own workmen; then there is Yawley, of Ash Tree Farm, who is become very pressing in his demands for not only a new set of farm buildings, but also a new dwelling-house.'

'The health and comfort of a large number of the inhabitants,' said Kate, 'is of more consequence than the convenience of one individual. A very small outlay would, I should think, make the Ash Tree buildings quite tenantable for some time to come. Yawley must wait.'

'Well then,' resumed Matthew, 'if the church restoration is to be carried out according to the plans Mr. Gurgoyne is now preparing, a great deal more money will be required than the committee ever dreamt of for it; and in that case they would probably look to you for a very heavy donation.'

'The church, as I have heard you say,' replied Kate, 'is water-tight; and before the winter sets in, a heating apparatus must be provided. That is all that need be done for the present.'

'Yes.'

'And begging his young reverence's pardon,' continued Kate, 'I fancy the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyne, when he set the idea of the restoration going, was thinking more of his own glory than that of the church. No, the restoration must wait.'

'But then,' added Matthew, 'there will be the furnishing of the new Hall;—the cost of that will be no trifle.'

'But the old furniture was stored, was it not?'

'Yes; but I thought you might be inclined to regard that as property personal to Mr. Vasper, and not to take it over with the estate.'

'You are quite right. I must so regard it. Well, never mind, the Hall isn't finished yet; and when it is, it must stand empty for

a time—it will be none the worse for drying a summer or two. The furnishing must wait.'

'Then you are decided that the improvement of the cottage property shall be taken in hand at once?'

'Quite. But talking of what belongs to Mr. Vasper, perhaps we owe him part of the cost of the Hall?'

'No; the building fund he accumulated was saved up out of the revenue of this property. The Thatchley and Broodley accounts, and the accounts of the property which is still his, were fortunately always kept separate.'

'Very well, then, the less reason for delaying the cottage work. Will you, as soon as possible, make a searching investigation of the property lying about Brickfield Lane, and draw up some scheme for its improvement?'

'In reply to that,' observed Matthew, 'I must now call your attention to the fact that, before you entered into possession of your inheritance, I had resigned the agency of these estates.'

This caused no surprise to Kate, for she had not forgotten Matthew's somewhat heated intimation to Vasper on the occasion of the latter's pointed remarks about the smart dog-cart. So, bending over the flowers, she gently observed, throwing a little pathos into her voice,—

'You are determined, then, to leave me to do the best I can at this difficult period of my life?—at a moment, too, when I have special need of some one having a complete acquaintance with all that concerns these estates?'

A pleasant thrill, of course, moved Matthew's heart as he heard these words.

'I am quite at your service, Miss Hunston,' he replied, 'if you command me to remain.'

'Very well, then,' she said with an air of indifference; 'it is understood that your engagement as agent here continues.'

'If that is your pleasure.'

She then dismissed him with the remark, that if she required to see him before he had prepared a scheme for improving the Brickfield Lane cottages, she would send for him.

She had not said a word about the letter he had written to her on the day when he thought he had discovered that Pattie was the heiress; but he was not slow to attribute to the influence of that letter the change in her bearing towards him now.

The establishment of Kate in her new possessions had been, so far as she was personally concerned, a matter of no trouble. As to the burden put on the Broodley Waters property by Vasper's father to add to the Thatchley estates, she was made to replace the original mortgagor.

Notwithstanding that Kate was already of age, the undisturbed possession of the property by the Vasper branch had not extended to the twenty years necessary to giving that family what is called a

primary title. Nor did Vasper for one moment question her right. The chain of evidence in her favour was too strong to be withstood. Vasper had, as has been seen, himself made the discovery of her identity, and had affirmed himself to have revealed it not only without coercion, but voluntarily, and with very great pleasure.

This much is certain, that he endured his loss with the greater fortitude because he still remained the undisputed owner of a handsome property which had always belonged to the Vaspers, and which adjoined the Thatchley estates ; and this much is probable, that his voluntary revelation may have been much accelerated, perhaps entirely caused, not only by his further discovery that there was a possibility of Matthew's stumbling on the secret, but also by the suspicion, which he soon had reason to entertain, that Matthew had actually entered upon a search after the hidden truth. As to the question whether Kate's long non-enjoyment of her rights was due to negligence or to crime on the part of the dead man who had called himself Richard Bagnall, all except Matthew and Vasper seemed too much interested in the exciting present to occupy themselves with a problem of the past which was of no apparent consequence.

Matthew thought of it, and put it aside from day to day ; always with the intention of investigating it.

Vasper thought of it, and remained in silence.

---

## CHAPTER II.

SOME few days after the interview last described, Matthew called at the 'Cottage' with certain preliminary notes and figures which he had made on the subject of the Brickfield Lane property.

He was informed that everybody was out, all having gone again to Fir Tree Hill to spend what was thought might turn out to be the last 'summer-house tea' of the season ; but a message had been left for him by kind Mrs. Parlby, enjoining him, if he called, and if he could spare the time, to go to her little party as early as possible.

He at once determined to go, and to go on foot. It was a sharp forty minutes' walk, and would help to get rid of his headache. This headache was the result of his having several nights of late asked Mr. Jack Gurgoyne, 'just to look in for half an hour before going to bed, and smoke just one cigar.' Now, the dryness induced by this narcotic, and by the garrulity into which people, having thrown the burden of the day from their shoulders, are apt to fall of an evening, failed not a single night to bring on to the table a tumbler of brandy and water ; which made the hour of going to bed a late one, and the hour of getting up in the morning a heavy one.

Matthew had vowed he wouldn't ask his friend in any more of an evening ; but the blow he had received that famous day in the Summer-House, caused him to break his vow for some nights, and the joy Kate's change of behaviour had filled him with caused the infraction to go on.

So, grief or joy, fatigue or repose, solitude or companionship, sweltering heat or nipping cold, hard work or a sluggish indisposition to rise to it—whichever of them it was, it was always an excuse for going to the bottle.

When he reached the Summer-House he found no one there, but he could see the party in scattered couples moving about not far away. It was one of the last of those hot days which sometimes occur at the end of September, and Matthew, having gone to bed very late the previous night, felt drowsy with the heat. He sat himself wearily down in a large arm-chair, and in a few minutes his head was bent in sleep.

It was not an easy sleep ; for the phantasmagoria of a troubled dream filled his mind. He was doing, and saying, and hearing all manner of strange things. Jack, the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle, Mrs. Parlby, Richard, Mr. Maybright, Pattie, Chamfer, Stopp, Peevers, Kate, Vasper, mingled with and turned into each other while making the most astounding remarks with an air of sanity.

Richard had asked Vasper what was the good of the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle wearing candles in his hat if he didn't light them when he went out on a dark night, and then Vasper replied,—

'Well, that is what I am now going to tell you ; that brings me to my point.'

Whereupon Kate interposed with the remark,—

'I wish you could excuse me now : I want to ask Mrs. Parlby something ;' and while Matthew was wondering whether now, after all, he was going to hear an explanation of the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle's inconsistency in the matter of the candles which he wore in his hat, Vasper said,—

'What I have to say will only detain you a few minutes ; you won't refuse to hear me ?'

'I wish you would not say what you are going to say,' said Kate with gentleness.

Matthew thought it odd that she should manifest such reluctance to hear the explanation about the candles in the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle's hat.

'I thought,' resumed Vasper, in the subdued tones of entreaty, 'that the pains I took in searching out and establishing your identity, and the disinterestedness I showed in so readily abandoning these estates to you, would in some measure cause you to look upon me—as—in a different way from that in which you would regard other men.'

'I am very grateful, of course, for all you have done for me,' said Kate, tenderly.

'I thought,' continued Vasper, 'that I might ask you to be my wife.'

'Oh no, no,' replied Kate; 'don't go on; please don't. That could never be.'

'Why?' asked Vasper, in a sort of snarl. 'I am still rich. I—'

'I haven't that feeling toward you which one ought to have toward the person one is going to marry.'

'That feeling would come afterwards. It often does. Have you no stronger reason?'

'Besides, I should not make you a suitable wife. I am too young for you. Why, you are more than old enough to be my father.'

Matthew here opened his eyes, and he saw through the open window, behind the lattice-shutter, which was half turned on its hinges, Kate and Vasper standing on the platform of the verandah.

The words he had heard in dreaming had been really uttered.

Matthew saw that Vasper had his hat off, and he saw also that the uncovered head was bald from forehead to crown. For the first time Matthew gave a thought as to what Vasper's age might be.

'Fifty-five, if he's a day,' he concluded.

Now Kate was only just turned twenty-two.

To soften her remark, and, as it were, to turn it into a joke, she gave a little laugh—such a little laugh as is given in gently remonstrating with a child. It proved to be a misplaced laugh, for it was misunderstood. Vasper saw in it mere derision. His pale grey eyes grew paler, and his look grew evil.

'Mr. Stopp,' called out Kate, 'I want you to come with me and settle, with Mrs. Parlbay, that matter we were talking about yesterday.'

Then turning again to Vasper, she said, almost in the voice of one asking for pardon,—

'You *will* excuse me now, won't you?'

And she moved off with Mr. Stopp, who had accepted her invitation obsequiously with his humblest bow and one of his most official phrases.

Vasper's gaze followed her with anger. Presently, however, that voluntary contraction of the facial muscles, which with him took the place of a smile, changed his looks, and he softly lit a cigar.

Matthew was just going to make his presence known by moving a chair with his foot, when Vasper went slowly down from the platform and sauntered away reflectively, over the grass and under the trees, by himself.

'There's mischief in that look,' thought Matthew, 'if I have any power at all of reading the human face; bitter, cruel mischief. I should like to know what plot he's hatching in that narrow brain of his.'

Vasper's reflections, before he put on the semblance of a smile, had been these :—

'Balked!—balked irremediably! But I was forced to run the risk of revealing her identity. The event has proved I was forced. I thought that cursed fellow was on the track, and he was. It was simply a question whether the chance of benefit which might accrue to the revealer of the affair, should be mine or his. Of course I was right to secure the chance for myself, but it has turned out nothing. The minx refuses me absolutely. I didn't want *her*; I don't like her; she sees much too quickly and her tongue's much too sharp for me; and in any case I shouldn't have enjoyed being hampered with a wife; but I did want the property back; I didn't want that to slip away entirely. And there isn't the least chance of its coming back to me. She actually laughed in my face, and twitted me about my age; and she walks off with that common prig of a Stopp, just as much as to say, anybody would suit her better than I. I wonder if she's partial to this fellow Stopp; she used to be on pretty intimate terms with him before that old brandy-keg at the "Sheaf" died. I don't think the pressure I could bring to bear on her, by the threat of a still further disclosure, would make her marry any one she had a disinclination to, and whom she had once refused—as me, for instance, on account of my age; for she's as obstinate as h—, and as proud; but such pressure would be just enough, I fancy, if she had a partiality for any one, to decide her on accepting him. This Stopp fellow is fifteen years younger than I, and he and she have always been very thick together. If he could only succeed in making her take a liking to him, I would undertake to succeed in making her let the scale turn finally in his favour. And when once they were married how I could startle them both!—why, she would be absolutely nothing but—by Jove, what a revenge!'

Then came the semblance of a smile, and he moved away reflectively, over the grass and under the trees, by himself.

That evening he had a long interview with Stopp. When the latter walked home to his lodgings—for he and Chamfer had hired rooms at the wheelwright's, in order, as they said to each other, that one of them might always be on the spot to safeguard their interests against the insidious efforts of Matthew to over-ride them—as Stopp walked home to his lodgings, with his gaze as usual nodding over the ground, his slow brain laboured, his dull eyes emitted something like light, and his swollen lips moved now and then as if with an effort to smile.

He was imagining great things. He foresaw himself snubbing Chamfer; he longed to snub Chamfer, because he believed—illogically—that though the latter had considerably promoted him in his profession by giving him his 'articles,' yet this had been done only in the view of securing the absolutely necessary aid of an able counsellor who would also be a laborious and obedient servant.

He foresaw himself dismissing Matthew and his friend Jack from



their employments with ignominy. He had the merit of being, so far as he was anything at all, what is called a 'self-made' man; but in his case, this merit carried with it, as probably it carries with it in nine cases out of ten, a narrow, watchful jealousy of the progress of others: for envy, the parent of jealousy, is too often the mark of those who begin with not having the happy advantages that others have. The efforts of those who seemed to him to show signs of possessing an ability likely to rival his own, he sought, with unflagging determination from hour to hour and from day to day, to keep in the dark, or if they came to the light, to frustrate. Even those from whom he had no rivalry to fear, he never aided except for the purpose of securing subordinate help, while appearing to grant generous protection and encouragement to lowly merit.

He foresaw himself sweeping down the Summer-House, modifying the new sets of farm buildings, and quashing the designs for the Church Restoration: the works of two persons who, by the ease with which they did everything, seemed to make the results of his long years of painful labour appear as nothing. There was Gurgyle who, though he had been 'articled,' and must therefore be regarded as a regular member of 'the profession,' had never been anything but an under-draughtsman, a simple clerk; and as for Bernock, of whom it was very frequently but most absurdly said, that his knowledge of architecture was first-rate, why, he had never been regularly 'articled,' and consequently could only be regarded as a mere 'odd hand.' He did not know that Matthew was a strenuous advocate for the maintenance in the professions of the system of certified apprenticeships; nor did his mind take note of the fact that Matthew had never established himself as an architect in independent practice, but had only let himself out for hire.

He foresaw himself putting out obnoxious lights, and establishing his own superiority in every quarter.

All these things he foresaw, because he foresaw himself, as being married to Kate, the Squire of Thatchley—subjected, it is true, to a thumping tribute payable every rent day to Vasper—but nevertheless the Squire of Thatchley.

---

### CHAPTER III.

It was noticeable from this time that Vasper, in calling at Mrs. Parlbys, or in going anywhere else where Kate was to be seen—and he had never sought her society more than now—was always accompanied by Stopp. What, however, drew to itself most attention was the fact that he appeared to be entertaining, at his house on the other estate, his new associate, as a permanent guest.

The ex-squire of Thatchley seemed to have entirely recovered from the disappointment which Kate had inflicted on him. He took occasion to avow it to her as his belief that what he had done

was a very silly thing for a man of his time of life, and he begged that their friendship might go on just as though the thing he referred to had never happened.

Kate had been duly inducted into her new state of life by a grand dame of those parts, and it had been the good pleasure of society to pronounce that the young lady would 'do.' Amongst women—her best judges—certain exceptions were taken to her merits; amongst men, none; of these the young hands said of her, that 'she was a very pretty gal,' and the old hands that 'she was a charmin' little thing, and would bring her husband a dam' fine property.'

But in those ceremonious gatherings of which it is said, amongst other things—'we *must* do this sort of thing, you know, for the sake of bringing young people together,' she took little share. The greater part of her time was taken up with what she had fallen into the habit of talking about, with considerable solemnity, as her 'new duties.' The poor and their wants were ever on her tongue.

That it was a sharp tongue they sometimes found, but they found also that her thoughts were wondrous wise and that her hands were strangely deft.

Plans she was always making and always carrying out: plans which she set going, stopped, changed, once again set going, stopped and changed again, and once again set going, with all the energy and activity of a nature which defies fatigue though sensitive to it, and ridicules the charge of not knowing one's own mind, if not knowing one's mind is the result of not having yet found out which is the right thing to do, and which is the wrong: a nature almost crazing for temperaments disposed to let things remain as they are. Matthew's nature, being more contemplative than active, was often troubled by her doings.

This much might be urged against her; that she was sometimes wanting in due deliberation, and that, consequently, in trying to do a thing the right way, she sometimes did it three times over, where another person would have only done it once: but this much must be urged in her behalf; that she generally did it right the third time, before ever the other person would have done it right or wrong the first.

She had always so managed affairs that servants were accustomed to say of her that, if not actually stingy, she was rather 'close'; one result of this, however, was that, while the freer-handed ones could only barely pay their own way, she had ever a spare five-pound note or so for any one having real need of it. It was to her, the 'close' one, that people went for help.

Matthew, while believing himself to know all about her, was, in truth, only just beginning to form something like a complete estimate of her character.

One of her most marked qualities seemed to him to be that she was nearly always doing something intended for the comfort of

others. Mrs. Parlbby and Pattie were the objects of her untiring solicitude: they dreaded the moment when they must cease to be, as it were, in her charge. They saw that in housekeeping she was the vigilant inspector, the keen foreseer, and the wise arranger of everything.

Kate's view of a woman's life appeared to be that it is granted to this end, that its holder shall take care of those about her.

Woman is the mother of man; and some believe that it is in those societies where her maternal instincts to cherish and to soften flourish most luxuriantly—in those societies, namely, where the hearthstone is the centre of present happiness—that woman takes her highest rank: preventing men from becoming wholly merciless to each other; in fine, governing men individually in private, so that men may govern themselves collectively in public.

And people who believe this say—and consistently, it appears, with their belief—that those women are wrong who desire to imitate and rival men, instead of being content to fashion them and to govern them.

Upon so interesting a theme, there arose a discussion to which the course of this narrative will presently lead.

Vasper, it has been said, sought more constantly than ever the society of Kate, and was never, it has also been said, unaccompanied by Stopp. He was vigorous in sounding the latter's praises everywhere, and professed him to be the Coming Man in architecture. He warned Chamfer, who happened to be down again at Thatchley—and it happened that he was down at Thatchley a good deal, now that he saw a determination on the part of Vasper to go on entertaining Stopp for the present—Vasper warned Chamfer that he must 'look out,' or he, Chamfer, would 'find himself nowhere.'

'Instead of keeping him going on as a sort of clerk,' said Vasper, 'you should have made a partner of him long ago.'

'That,' replied Chamfer with twitching mouth, 'is what I always meant to do, of course.'

Stopp took note of the pains Kate put herself to in the interest of the cottagers—that is, in the interests of by far the greater part of the residents on her property; and acting on a hint supplied by the more inventive mind of Vasper, he suggested that public readings and lectures once a-week in the evening should be given to the villagers. He made this suggestion in the special view of winning favour in the eyes of Kate by making himself useful to her in connection with her chief employment; and he had the greater hope of success, because he believed himself to be endowed with rare powers both in the art of expressing his own thoughts and in that of reading aloud the thoughts of others.

Kate seized the idea with warm expression of grateful approval; and Vasper and Stopp agreed that the latter had made a capital point.

## CHAPTER IV.

WITH a little carpentry, and with a few articles of the Hall furniture taken out of store, Matthew, under Kate's direction, did what was necessary for turning the village school-room once a-week into a place for public readings and lectures.

Mr. Stopp, not unsuspected, in choosing his subject, of desiring to draw the attention of the Church Restoration Committee to himself, led off with a lecture on the History of Stained Glass Windows. It cannot be said that his discourse imitated in any of its parts, either the limpidity or the picturesqueness of his vitreous subject; and whether it was that the audience were plunged by his reflections into the deeps of historical meditation, or whether they were simply indifferent; this is certain, that they manifested no outward signs of a lively appreciation of what was said. Such of them as felt the slightest disposition to cough did so with a vigour which almost overcame the noise made by others in yielding themselves up to yawns of unheard-of length and heartiness. Amongst the younger members of the gathering, there was noticed a feverish activity of the feet and elbows; accompanied by a frequent tittering, which certainly was not provoked by anything falling from the lips of the lecturer.

When Billy Smith was remonstrated with in a loud whisper by one of the authorities present, he replied in a louder whisper, and with a hue made purple by suppressed laughter, that Tommy Harris 'kept on pulling his hair;' to which charge Tommy Harris, in an equally loud whisper, and with an equally empurpled face, made answer, that Billy Smith 'kept on blowing into his ear through a straw.'

With the exception of sundry diversions of this sort, the behaviour of the meeting was marked by solemnity; which in some measure justified Mr. Stopp's saying, in the course of thanking his hearers for their patience, that the 'gravity of their demeanour, and the indefatigable attention with which they had followed him in his humble effort to unveil, to reveal to their—if he might use the expression—naked gaze—in short, to uncover and disclose to their eyes some of the hidden mysteries which lay concealed in the unnoticed corners—he might say the unremarked recesses—of this archaeological and recondite, he would even say abstruse, almost occult art—all this,'—he had lost sight of his starting-point, but thought 'this' would adequately take its place,—'all this warranted, justified—in point of fact, corroborated his belief that those present had pursued the subject from one salient point to another, with the warmest and most appreciative interest.'

## CHAPTER V.

THE following week the entertainment was undertaken by Mr. Chamfer. There seemed every prospect that the art education of the agriculturists of Thatchley, once begun, was not to be suffered to drop. Mr. Chamfer's subject—selected, it appeared, like that of his predecessor in the lecturer's chair, with a meaning glance in the direction of the Restoration Committee—was the Church Architecture of the Val d'Arno. His address was enriched—and in no niggardly spirit of keeping his treasures to himself—with quotations from that manuscript of his which had not yet been given to the world, upon which few eyes had ever gazed, and which only privileged ears had ever heard read. These quotations included the elegantly worded allusion, already mentioned, to Italia's azure sky; and there was a neat reference made—with considerable ingenuity it must be confessed—to that celebrated knocker on the door of the Palazzo Vermicellini.

Of course these attempts at the education of the villagers, being begun at one of the ends instead of at one of the beginnings, were not promising. The two lecturers, who after all were not so much a couple of dull pedants as a couple of dull and selfish speculators, nearly succeeded in making Kate believe that the new scheme for improving the minds of her charges was a failure.

With a sincere conviction, however, that the scheme could be made an easy means of benefiting 'his people,' the reverend and youthful Mr. Gregory Gurgoyne persuaded her not to let the undertaking fall to the ground. He offered, himself, to give a lecture—to become a layman for the nonce, as he phrased it, in fact, to throw aside, as it were—to use his own figure of speech—the priestly garb, and appear for a while on the stage of mundane oratory.

Dull, it seemed, he was as the others; but of the genuine enthusiasm of his belief that he was doing good to others no one who knew him had any doubt.

Notwithstanding his promise of a temporary descent to 'mundane oratory,' the subject of his address had nothing of lightsome airiness about it. It treated of the ancient monument of Stonehenge; but it was clear that his style was not marked by any quality corresponding to the exhilarating freshness of the breezes which keep bare and smooth the dark stones of that awful ruin. He spoke little of the fabric of the Great Temple of the Plain, but much of the priests who had ministered at its altar. He dwelt largely on the vast power wielded by those dread rulers, not only as the mouthpieces of religion, of justice, and of education, but also as the unassailable arbiters of the council and the camp. Then by an easy application of these facts, he essayed to show how lofty, in his opinion, should be esteemed the priest's office in all times, and especially, for reasons given, in these present times, and how that, in his opinion,

the priest is right in upholding, and is bound to uphold, the loftiness of his office by resisting to the end the slightest attempt made to reason with him on any point whatsoever. Indeed, Kate, as well as all who followed him in his discourse, heartily wished for a little more about the Stones, and a good deal less about the calling.

True it was, his essay lacked not ability; but so far as entertainment was concerned, it was clear that it was not more successful than the two preceding ones. The uneasy shuffling of the feet and the coughing and yawning were as observable as before.

Vasper suggested that a few particulars concerning the origin of the ancient Etruscans, or concerning the Historical Aspects of Algebra, might be acceptable to the mind of Thatchley; for which silly piece of pleasantry Kate swiftly rebuked him.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

THE organisers of the entertainment scheme—comprising the greater part of all the personages of this narrative who then found themselves at Thatchley, in which number must be included Mr. Peevers, who, on the plea of 'executorship business,' as he called it, was down on another visit to Mrs. Parlbey—had gathered themselves round the platform after the conclusion of the lecture last described, and when the general audience had left the school building. They were commenting on a question raised by one of them, as to what degree of interest the assembly as a whole had manifested.

'Well, anyhow,' said Mr. Peevers, 'it's kep' 'em from the public-house for one night.'

'If it has only kept them from the public-house,' observed Matthew, 'that isn't enough.'

'What! ain't that the object in view?' inquired Mr. Peevers.

'Yes,' interposed Kate, 'that is a great object; but another equally great is their instruction.'

'And there is another object greater still, in my humble opinion,' added Matthew. 'If these hard toilers, who were wearied in body when they came, have only received instruction, and been kept from the public-house, they will not readily come again. It is necessary that they should have found amusement.'

'What!' cried Mr. Peevers again. 'Are we puttin' ourselves to all this here trouble just to provide amusement for such folks as them? What have they got to do with amusement?'

'A good deal,' replied Matthew.

'Well, and ain't it provided for 'em, if it comes to that,' retorted Peevers. 'Why, even if they didn't understand a word of what was said, ain't it a pleasure to 'em to come and sit in a nice, warm room along with *us*, and to see *us* a-hearin', and a-understandin' and a-

enjoyin' of what's bein' said?—and ain't it a pleasure to 'em to know, while we're a-doin' all this for 'em, that they're bein' kep' from the public-'ouse all the time?'

'If they are amused here—yes,' replied Matthew.

'Ah! now I remember,' observed Kate, 'you have got a theory about the part Amusement should play in life. Mr. John Gurgoyne was trying to explain it to us the other day.'

And by a few skilful remarks she succeeded in leading Matthew into an exposition of his theory. He explained to them, as he has been seen to explain on a less public occasion, how great, in his mind, was the importance of amusement as a necessity in life, and consequently how great the importance of its being determined on and provided for as deliberately as we determine on and provide for what is called the serious business of our lives. With the openly expressed approbation of Kate, he finished thus,—

'What I say is this: that there should be given to the choice and provision of our pleasures a good deal more of that anxious thought which is given to the choice and provision of what we call our serious business in this world: in fine, that amusement should not be left to chance.'

'Well,' exclaimed Mr. Peevers, 'I never listened to such dangerous talk in my life! Why, it's positively wicked; in fact, as our minister would say, its perralous because it's insidious.'

'I suppose,' said Vasper, with one of his mechanical smiles, 'that when Tommy, or whatever his name may be, has been asked, and has decided on, what profession he will follow, whether he will be a doctor or a lawyer or a parson, or whether he will fight his country's battles as a soldier or a sailor, he will then be asked what is to be his favourite amusement in life; so that it may be duly provided for and laid down in grooves for him to run in; if enough spirit be left him to do anything at all except at a well-regulated walk; but I can very well imagine Tommy replying that he would very much rather that his amusement were let alone, that he would be quite content to take it as it came, and that his mind was quite at ease as to the probability of his coming across it somewhere or other; in short, that he had every confidence in his own ability to discover it; and in so replying he would be saying, I suppose, only what any other sane youth would say. For my part I hate doctrinaires of every sort: people with cut-and-dried political or social theories generally go mad upon them. As for this theory about amusement, it's clearly absurd. The essence of pleasure is novelty, and therefore amusement in general should be left to chance.'

'My contention, however,' remarked Matthew, 'is that it should *not* be left to chance, because—'

'As though,' continued Vasper, ignoring Matthew's attempt to make an observation, 'our pleasures are to be bound by the same hard and fast lines that our duties are! The idea of our cultivating a fear lest we shouldn't amuse ourselves enough, and of our laying

down rules to ensure our getting enough of what, according to all moralists, we're only too prone to by nature !'

'But,' began Kate, 'surely—'

'I can imagine,' pursued Vasper, doggedly, holding on to the line of his attack, 'at the next meeting of the bank directors, the chairman solemnly interrupting the proceedings every half-hour or so, according to prescribed regulations, to give himself and his colleagues an opportunity of relaxing their overstrained minds in a game of blindman's buff; or the judges adjourning the courts every now and then and sending the barristers and the attornies out to spin their tops in Westminster Hall—or, I ought to say, on the pavements of Fleet Street and the Strand.'

'But—' began Kate again.

'I can see a pale and anxious mother, with streaming eyes,' pursued Vasper, 'hanging on the neck of her darling boy, who has just got a commission in the army and is setting out for his regiment, with his head full of the fun he's going to have in the company of his brother officers—not school lads, you know, such as he has hitherto associated with, but regular, downright, out-and-out *men* of the world, as he thinks 'em; I can hear his weeping mother implore him to promise her by all the love he bears her, not to let his duties drag him from necessary amusements, and never to forget the vast importance of pleasure; and I can hear the dutiful youth pledge himself that nothing on earth shall prevent him from going in for it, every time he gets the chance, like one o'clock.'

'The idea, I know,' said Matthew, 'easily lends itself to burlesque; and it would be a dull wit indeed that couldn't grind something funny out of it. But I don't see, for all that, how you have disproved my argument, that amusement—especially in the case of a young man—is a thing which should not be left to chance.'

'But surely,' observed Mrs. Parlby, who belonged to a religious sect which strongly inclined to the belief that all worldly pleasure, as they called it, is more or less connected with the devil, 'surely young men are only too ready to run after pleasure without having it provided for them.'

'That is the very reason why it should not be left to chance,' replied Matthew. 'If it is known that they *will* run after pleasure, it is no good telling them that it is wicked or frivolous to run after it; what is required is, that care should be taken as to the direction in which they run.'

'Exactly so,' observed Kate. 'You can't laugh away that assertion, Mr. Vasper.'

'I am not talking,' resumed Matthew, 'so much about young fellows belonging to the opulent classes, young men who in the country are enabled to amuse themselves with hunting and shooting and other healthful sports, and who in both town and country have plenty of well-bred relatives and friends to visit: of course the direction in which even they turn for amusement should be cared



for, but considering the abundance of wholesome pleasures they have at their command, they have little excuse for going in the direction of the unwholesome ones : no, I am talking more particularly of the young fellow who turns to unwholesome amusements for the reason—almost the sole reason in many cases—that wholesome ones don't readily present themselves to him.'

'But wholesome pleasures,' remarked Mrs. Parlbly, 'are within everybody's reach : money is not indispensable for that.'

'True,' admitted Matthew ; 'but those pleasures which are obtainable without the aid of money, or without much money, are obtainable only at the price of considerable self-control ; a quality in which we all know the majority of young men do not abound. My idea is directed more especially towards young men with small means who enter the learned professions, to those with still smaller means who enter offices with salaries from the first, who enter not with the special object of learning but of working, and to those lads who are brought up to employments in which the hands play a greater part than the head.'

'All those young men, in fact,' said Kate, 'who are not included in what you have referred to as the opulent classes.'

'Just so,' replied Matthew. 'Let us take an average case. The relatives and friends of a lad in the country have at great pains succeeded in providing him with a stool in a London office. They enjoin him to continue in the habit his mother has carefully trained him to—of saying his prayers night and morning. And the same good mother packs a Bible in his trunk, and then he is sent up to town with the idea that, a career having been found for him, nothing more is necessary. Well, now, unless the same care which has provided him with a situation has also been able to insure his being invited to houses in London where he can make pleasing and desirable acquaintances, or unless he has some absorbing hobby which never fails of furnishing him with amusement, the chances are ten to one—I put it at a moderate estimate—that the interests of his leisure time will gradually subside into the public-house billiard-room—a worse training place than which, for a young fellow, it would be difficult to find.'

'There is nothing that I know of in a billiard-room which must necessarily do any one any harm,' said Vasper. 'A young fellow can amuse himself in a billiard-room, even at a public-house, without necessarily learning to get drunk, and cheat and tell lies—without, in fact, necessarily doing what sentimental moralists would call turning himself from a gentleman into a cad.'

'Necessarily—no, perhaps ; probably—yes, certainly,' rejoined Matthew. 'Everybody acquainted with the subject knows perfectly well that the moral atmosphere of the public billiard-table is bad ; I don't care whether it is over a London bar, or in a café-billard in Paris, or at the back of a drinking-saloon in New York. The young Frenchman's head does not suffer much, it is true, from

the light 'bock' beer he drinks now-a-days, and I am not sure that the young American does not indulge in Bourbon whisky and lager beer less than the young Englishman does in the gins and brandies, and Scotch and Irish whiskies, and the strong ales of London; but the usual effect of billiard-room fellowship is the same everywhere. One of the first effects observable is a change in the external manner: the external manner which is an almost certain index of the internal bearing. The gentle courtesy which he has caught from his mother and sisters gives place to an air of vulgar 'fastness'; he is quite unconscious himself of the change going on; but in the quick soil of a youth's easy power of imitation the offensive change grows apace; and when the lad goes home for his holidays, the mother notes the alteration with sorrowful disapprobation, as the father does with unconcealed displeasure. They had not wished their son to grow up a ninny full of girlish affectation, or a prig, kept in the grooves of a narrow morality only by a continual self-glorifying comparison drawn between himself and others; but certainly they had not expected him to come back to them a slovenly-souled cad.'

'Well, I don't know,' said Vasper, 'that we need work ourselves into a maudlin state over the falling-off in deportment of a herd of young quill-drivers. We are not going to be gulled into believing that that is a matter of national importance.'

'I have no intention,' replied Matthew, 'of trying to make out that a falling-off in a youth's manner is a matter of any great importance in itself. I selected that defect not so much in view of itself, as in view of the many defects to which it is an index. I pointed to only one defect of only one type; but there are numerous other defects, and numerous other types, and the aggregate number of persons included in all the types is not only numerous, it is multitudinous; and, therefore, in regard to the question between amusements left to chance, and amusement deliberately planned and provided for, I will venture to say, it is of national importance.'

---

## CHAPTER VII.

'Ah, well then,' remarked Vasper, 'you had better sketch out an Act of Parliament for providing and regulating the Amusements of the Public.'

'I never had Parliamentary action in any country in mind,' replied Matthew; 'it is a matter for families and individuals to see to for themselves.'

'We must no longer be content,' continued Vasper, 'to provide Tom, Dick, and Harry with employment, with giving them the means of earning their bread; we must now get up companies to provide the poor things with amusement in their leisure hours.'

'Such companies are already in existence,' said Matthew; 'we have our glass-palace companies, and our fish-tank companies, and our music-hall companies, and many other companies. But I have not entered at all into the question of whether there be, or whether there be not, a sufficiency of amusement provided for the public; in fact, my remarks have had reference more to private and individual, than to public amusements. My contention has simply been, that the direction a young fellow runs in for amusement should not be left to chance; that thought should be given to that part of his future, as well as to the matter of furnishing him with the means of earning his living.'

'Well, as far as I can see,' observed Mr. Peevers, with impatience, 'all this here talk amounts to this—that parents should tell their sons, that going after bad pleasures must end in their ruin—as though that truth wasn't obvious enough.'

'You have clearly missed the point of my contention,' replied Matthew, with a laugh, 'and therefore it isn't surprising that you should have failed to sum up our little discussion correctly.'

'Failed! How so?' exclaimed Mr. Peevers, warmly.

'Anybody who has followed the conversation could point out how,' replied Matthew.

'Why, of course,' observed Kate. 'Really, Mr. Peevers, you can't have paid much attention to what has been said.'

'Really, Kate,' interposed Mrs. Parly, 'I must confess that if I had been asked to sum up the discussion, I should have said something like what Mr. Peevers did.'

'And really,' added Pattie, laughing, 'I must confess the same thing.'

'And so must I,' added two or three others present.

Matthew and Vasper smiled; the first regretfully, the second with delight—both knew how difficult it is to keep the real point of an argument before the minds of people in general.

'It appears to me,' said Kate, 'that Mr. Bernock's contention is perfectly clear. To tell young men that bad pleasures lead to ruin is precisely what he contends is not enough. He says it is *not* enough to warn them against evil amusements; he says that some of that care should be given to putting them in the way of good ones which is now almost entirely given to providing them with the means of gaining a livelihood; and he says that, for carrying out his recommendation, he would look much more to the private efforts of families and individuals than to the action of governments or of any other public associations.'

'Well, now then,' said Mr. Maybright to Matthew, with a smile, 'is *that* your contention?'

'Yes,' replied Matthew; 'that I consider to be a correct summing up of our discussion.'

'Well, but *this* truth,' said Mr. Peevers, 'is just as obvious as the one I thought you was drivin' at.'

'Yes, but obvious truths,' rejoined Matthew, 'are very often just

those which are the most difficult to get people to attend to. A railway company has little difficulty in getting the public to attend to a particular direction at a particular station—to the effect, for instance, that the way out is to the left, up the staircase, and over the bridge; but it has the greatest difficulty in the world in getting people to bear in mind the general warning, which applies to the whole railway with all its branches, and which points to an obvious truth, that it is dangerous to get out of a train in motion. In the first case, passengers are in immediate need of a particular piece of information, and are glad to get it; in the other, they think, “Oh, everybody knows that!” and then the warning goes out of their minds.’

‘Well, now,’ said Kate, before the party separated, ‘since Mr. Bernock is so strenuous an advocate for systematic amusement, we must call upon him to come forward himself and take the platform for one night.’

‘I will do so,’ said Matthew, ‘if you wish it. But, Jack, I think you could fill the office better than I.’

‘Suppose,’ replied Mr. Jack Gurgyle, ‘we undertake an evening’s entertainment together? We should then be able to keep each other in countenance, like two men going to be hanged.’

‘Very well,’ concluded Kate, ‘you shall undertake an evening together. Let me see. We have the two next entertainments already arranged; yours, the partnership affair, must be the third.’

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE subject set down for the next lecture was that of ‘Total Abstinence from Intoxicating Drinks,’ and Mr. Peevers, its proposer, had undertaken to handle it.

Of this lecture it may be said that its argumentative parts were of a strikingly monetary character. The attention of the audience was, for instance, among other facts of domestic economy, emphatically called to what were the equivalents of the annual cost of a daily pint of beer, as expressed in numerous other articles of household consumption. For example, how many sacks of potatoes, how many sides of bacon, what quantity of coal, how much flour, the extraordinary lengths of calico and flannel for inside wear, the yards of stuff for outside wear, and how many pairs of boots, could be purchased by saving up for the period of one year the cost of the quantity of malt liquor mentioned. It is certain that the result of these calculations, given one by one, were startling to the minds of the greater number of those listening, and it may reasonably be hoped that they were not without benefit in some cases; but in others the effect was undoubtedly illusory; for many, confused by the multitude of facts, and dazzled by their brilliancy, went away

with a glimmering impression that, by the simple acts of forswearing and foregoing a pint of beer a-day, they could not only enjoy its equivalent in one of the things mentioned, but in all, and so assure to themselves comfortable shelter, a plentiful board, and a sufficiency of clothing all the year round.

The persuasive parts of Mr. Peevers' address were not so successful as his arguments. The art of persuading, as practised by him, had in it too much of the derisive and the minatory. Merciless jeers were alternated by equally merciless threats; and where he thought he was most firmly clinching conversion, he was only most surely exciting resentment, that frequent generator of obstinacy. When he asked his hearers what end too miserable they could anticipate for a man who drank beer—and when, after telling them how the house he lived in was his own, as several others were, and all because he had never drunk beer or any other intoxicating drink, he asked them if they thought he would be such an unspeakable idiot as to risk one of his rents by letting a house to a man who drank beer—when he asked them this, there was not a man among them who was not conscious that in the matter of rent he was often behind-hand, and that, in the matter of beer, whatever he might be induced to do in the future, he had hitherto always drunk as much of it as ever he could get. How this consciousness, lashed by further derision, was more conducive to resentment and consequent obstinacy than to conversion can be readily understood.

The provider of the next entertainment was a Mrs. Somebody, the daughter of a deceased rector of Thatchley, and the wife of an existing wealthy farmer. This lady in her youth had, in consequence of the bountiful number of her brothers and sisters, been compelled to let her private homilies to the village folk go uncorroborated by gifts in the concrete; and what she had practised formerly as a necessity, she now, when she was grown rich, continued as a habit. The result of this was, that the villagers, who before had listened to her with patience, grew in the present restless under her ministrations; and rude young men of the place, after hearkening with a show of attention to the exhortations which she dropped into on chance encounters with them, would, so soon as her back was turned, symbolize their estimation of the value of her remarks by the most disrespectful application of the palm of the hand to their own persons that the vulgar are known to practise.

The theme of this lady's lecture was the Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The pleasure which a narrative of the great navigator's exploit naturally gave to her grown-up hearers was marred by an uncomfortable sense, which they could not rid themselves of, that they were failing to play parts which they were expected to play—the parts of highly-amused children of tender years to be acted in support of Mrs. Somebody's finely-sustained character of the amiable aunt who had run up to the nursery with the express object of telling the little innocents a pretty story.

This lady could never shut her mental vision to the immense social distance which she imagined to exist between herself and the cottagers of Thatchley; and the trouble she put herself to for the purpose of lessening the embarrassment she was sure they must feel when in converse with her was, no doubt, the cause of much of the disrespectful gesture which, in view of her retreating figure, the unpolished youth of the place indulged in.

The presentation to untutored minds of so unusual a subject as the one she had selected, gave her at first some perturbation; but an expedient occurred to her: she would address her simple-minded hearers as though they were children.

She said it was a long, long time ago—oh, such a long time!—ever so much longer ago than when poor old Thomas Corduroy, who had died last year at such an immense age, was born; ever so much longer ago than that when Christopher Columbus resolved to go and see if there were any obstacle to his reaching China by the western sea; and she said, oh, he had to go such a long, long way out to sea before he descried land; how far, did they ever think?—well, more than ten times as far as it was to Carborough. Some of them had walked to Carborough, had they not? (she was much too straightforward to pretend to believe that *they* had ever ridden to Carborough, even in a wagon)—well, it was more than ten times, more than twenty times—just fancy!—more than a hundred times further than that!—more than three hundred times! and the sea was so deep, too!—ever so much deeper than the deepest hole in the pond in Brickfield Lane, where the poor horse was drowned.

And so on, to the great delight of Richard; at whose side Matthew, having entered the room unavoidably a little late, and having therefore taken the first vacant place he came to, was sitting.

‘I’m afraid,’ said Richard to Matthew, in nodding his head towards the audience, which was largely made up of grown-up men and women, including not a few of patriarchal age, ‘that she’s a-keepin’ these young folks up too late; they’ll get so excited there’ll be no gettin’ ’em quiet again.’

---

## CHAPTER IX.

AND now it was come to the turn of Matthew and Mr. Jack Gurgoyle to afford the village an evening’s entertainment.

The programme—a simple page of writing, with no copies—had been submitted to Kate, and had received her approval.

Mr. Jack Gurgoyle undertook the serious pieces, Matthew the humorous ones.

Matthew read his selections quietly and evenly, attempting no eccentricities of voice or gesture, but trying to make himself vanish from the mental eye, and leaving it to the authors to create the

intended effect ; and so it followed that his audience, instead of having to exercise an effort of the will in cackling whenever they thought the reader intended them to cackle, had only to let their minds rest in a passive state ; with the result that they found themselves laughing until, as the saying is, their ribs ached and the tears ran down their cheeks. Undoubtedly this statement of the effect created applies, in regard to the whole of what was read, only to the most educated members of the gathering ; but even those whose perceptions had not been trained to that degree of keenness which is necessary to a full appreciation of the witty and the humorous—even these were tickled, and not seldom nor lightly. And when he read the moving account, told in prose by a poet, of the death of Nelson, there were breasts that heaved and eyes that swam, and many tears were wiped away surreptitiously.

Mr. Jack Gurgoyne had made his list of pieces as strong as possible, and in handing it to Matthew had said,—

‘That will fetch ‘em, I think.’

And it did ‘fetch’ them.

When he told them how the Six Hundred rode to death, and never asked the reason why, and how well Horatius had kept the bridge in the brave days of old, there were many in the room whose hearts beat and whose minds glowed as they had never beat nor glowed before. There were many who had never until then known that there was such a thing in language as beauty. The magic of words in the mouth of genius entered their souls as a new sensation.

Many of them had indeed thrilled at the telling of stories before : at the story, for instance, of how Ben Bunt of Thatchley had fought Sam Slogg of Pitswell for three mortal hours by the sounding of the Hall clock, and had conquered him—Ben was the father of old Ben that is, but who was called Young Ben then ; of how the famous carpenter, who had daubed his initials in red paint on the beam which he had been employed to fix in the church roof, and who was the last man who had been put in the stocks, had held his own as the greatest wrestler at Bowton Fair, and no man from any part far or near could overcome him, as he did for year after year, notwithstanding all the famous men who were got ready to meet him, until he took to drinking harder than even *his* head could stand, when he broke up, mind and body, and died in the work-house ; and of how old Bob that’s dead and gone these twenty years—but there was young Bob, his son—well, certainly young Bob himself was going on for eighty, must be—of how old Bob, for a wager, mowed the Five Corner Piece in one day from sunrise to sunset, when old Farmer Stubble—he held the Ash Tree Farm in those days—asked him, ‘Can you do it, Bob?’ and old Bob, he only said, ‘I’ll try, master ;’ and the squire and the parson—the squire and the parson of that time—they came to see ; and the squire, he said, ‘Can you do it, Bob?’ and Bob, he only said, ‘I’ll try, squire ;’ and he did it, and all alone by himself. Bless you !

in those times they used to do things the like of which you never hear of now-a-days.

The telling of such deeds as these had stirred them many and many a time, but the deeds wrought by the Six Hundred and by Horatius were such as they had never heard tell of before. And they had never heard deeds told in such words. The trumpet-blast of the poet's utterance shivered in their ears for the first time.

'Well, Robert,' said Kate, making herself, with the delicate feminine voice, heard by the venerable son of him who had done the great deed in the Five Corner Piece, 'and how have you enjoyed it all?'

'Right well, miss, right well, thank ye kindly, miss. I haven't sat so warm all this winter afore.'

They had put him in a sheltered spot near the stove.

'But could you hear?'

'Yes, miss, I think I heard somethin' once.'

That, no doubt, was the part where Horatius leapt into the tide.

'And it's an amazin' fine thing of the two gentlemen to do, miss,' continued Robert. 'And right kind gentlemen they are, too, and often and often they give me —Robert was going to say a shilling or some tobacco, but he did not wish to lessen the appearance of his necessities by calling attention to benefits he received, and so turned the sentence in time, and went on thus—' a nod and a kind word. I can't hear much o' what is said on the platform, miss, but it's right comfortable to sit in the light, feelin' warm, and knowin' you're listenin' to great learnin'; and anybody can see them are two learned gen'lem'n.'

'And you are feeling better, Robert?' asked Kate. 'Your rheumatism is not so troublesome now?'

'Oh, I don't know about that, miss,' replied Robert, who always showed irritation at any remark hinting at the least diminution of his sufferings. 'I can feel it's a-goin' to come on worse than ever one o' these days.'

'But you are not suffering now, at all events,' said Kate; 'and you are able to get out; and you find the new great coat and the worsted gloves thick and warm, don't you?'

'Oh, right thick and right warm, miss, and God 'll bless you, miss, for thinkin' on the poor, and maybe this winter won't be so bad as last;—but I dunno,' continued Robert, with a corrective groan, lest this favourable view of the weather might lead, on the part of his benefactors, to too bright a view being taken of his lot, 'I dunno; it's very likely to freeze hard before long, and it's mortal damp now, and I shouldn't wonder if I had the rheumatiz worse than ever the next time.'

'Well, well, but you must be thankful you haven't got it now,' said Kate. 'Why, there is poor old William Blackthorn—he would be very glad to be as well and strong as you are, and to get out as you do; but he has to keep indoors at present.'



'Oh yes, miss, he were always a poor, weak creetur, William were; but he don't have the rheumatiz so bad as me, miss. There isn't no one in the parish suffer rheumatiz like me: *I'm* the worst case on parson's book, if I may make bold to say so, miss, and have been now for gettin' on six year.'

'Robert,' observed Richard, to whom the idea of calling any one Robert whose name was Bob was a pleasantry of keen savour—'Robert thinks if he wasn't worse than all the rest of the parish he would be no better than anybody else.'

At this paradoxical remark Mr. Maybright and Mr. Jack Gurgoyne laughed; but Mr. Stopp, who had now come to think that, without doubt, he must, by means of that certain irresistible lever held in the hands of Vasper, be elevated to be the Squire of Thatchley, and who, therefore, regarded it as an outrage upon the respect due to the future Squire of Thatchley, and to the future wife of that magnate, that a common boy should dare, of his own motion, to make a remark in their presence, murmured to Matthew, in a whisper ostentatiously hushed,—

'Ought you not to cause that youth to withdraw?'

To which question Matthew, knowing that in Kate's eye Richard was a privileged person, replied, in the same ostentatiously hushed whisper,—

'In the absence of any duly appointed chairman, who might be called upon to preserve order, I can do nothing; more especially as the youth in question is here by express command, to the end that he may make himself useful when called upon.'

And, as if to illustrate the latter half of this remark, Kate told Richard to go and see whether the moon were up, and, if not, to light the lantern.

Mr. Stopp made a mental note, to the effect that he must take into account how best Matthew and the youth Richard might most speedily be involved in one and the same disgrace.

---

## CHAPTER X.

COUNTING on that secret lever, which, although he was still ignorant of its precise nature, he knew from Vasper's statement should be of irresistible force, Stopp had indeed come, as has been mentioned towards the conclusion of the preceding chapter, to believe that he was now most surely destined to be the Squire of Thatchley.

George Stopp, Esquire, Lord of the Manor of Thatchley, and—yes, certainly, he had heard of another property belonging to the inheritance, lying somewhere near the Severn, and called Broodley Waters—Lord also of the Manor of Broodley Waters, J.P. of Northamptonshire, and of some other shire, a D.L., perhaps—why not?—

of the county, and—who knew?—if he subscribed frequently to the institutions of Carborough, and made friends with its aldermanic functionaries and other leading personages, and invested in the bank, and got on the board of directors, and took advantage of every opportunity for speaking in public, and so bringing into flow that fine official phraseology of his—why, then, to the other distinctions there might have to be added that of M.P.

Such was the groove to which his thoughts were ever recurring—a groove which tended as surely to an unforeseen end as the action of the other personages of this story was thither surely tending. And as to the probability of his winning the hand of the youthful lady of the manor, such frequent nods and winks at the view of her in any kind of converse with Stopp was observable, that it would have been necessary to shut the eyes not to see that his was only one of many minds into which the idea of his good fortune had entered.

It had entered into the mind of Matthew—causing something of a shudder at its first reception, and once there, hardly ever passing out of his mental vision, on the contrary, strengthening in tenacity and growing in probability.

It seemed to him that it had also entered the mind of gentle Mrs. Parlyb and good Mr. Maybright, and that a shade fell upon their amiable faces whenever they beheld Mr. Stopp in Kate's presence.

And he tried in vain to satisfy himself that it had not entered Kate's mind. She appeared to him to consult with Stopp a great deal, and to set great store by that person's officially couched opinions. In Matthew's hearing she freely repeated Vasper's unstinted encomiums on the merits of Stopp; and she commented, with much apparent pleasure, on the latter's having been at last made a partner by Mr. Chamfer.

One day, being asked by Kate as to the qualifications of a certain individual in relation to a certain business which it was suggested should be referred to him, Matthew spoke of the individual in question favourably.

'Yes,' said Kate, 'but, apart from his special business aptitude, what is his general character? what is the general influence he would be likely to exercise?'

'That is difficult to answer,' replied Matthew, 'speaking of him generally and apart from his business qualifications, I can only say that he is a vulgar, fussy, pushing kind of man.'

'Oh, but very often it is highly necessary,' returned Kate, 'that a man *should* be fussy and pushing. What good is a man's talent either to himself or to the world if he keeps it in the dark? and he makes a great mistake if he thinks the world at large goes searching about for buried genius. We generally recognise it when we see it, but we don't generally see it until the possessor has thrust it into our faces. A man who has to get on *must* be pushing; look at Mr.

Stopp—his capacity would probably have remained unrecognised if he had not pushed for himself. Oh no, a man must push.'

'Quite true; but,' replied Matthew, who, besides knowing that he himself always turned to the shade when he could avoid the glare, was irritated by this so frequent reference to Mr. Stopp, 'though we admit that a man must push if he wants to get on in this life, I venture to stipulate that his pushing should be done so gently that it is hardly observable, and that in pushing to get a good place for himself he should be careful not to impede others, who are pursuing the same laudable object.'

'And as for vulgarity and fussiness,' continued Kate, 'we must excuse that if the results of the pushing are on the whole beneficial to mankind. Men of thought are all very well, but the world would come to a pretty pass if all men were to do nothing but think; for my part I half believe that the greater part of the work of the world is done by its fussy, pushing men.'

'But even if it is so,' replied Matthew, 'these fussy, pushing men have to be guided by the strong will or the strong influence of men of thought.'

'Oh, but these noisy, officious, elbowing men who are so fond of making themselves seen and heard,' returned Kate, 'manage to do a good deal even without the aid of men of thought.'

'Don't you think, dear,' interposed Mrs. Parlbly, 'that, though noisy, officious, energetic men are undoubtedly not without their use in this life, that it would be better to give prominence to the fact, that the best work of the world is done by men of the best ability, whether in action or in thought, and that men of the best ability have too calm a confidence in themselves ever to think that either fuss or noise is necessary to the success of their plans? Admitting that, we cannot claim a high place for noisy, fussy men—can we?'

'Oh, well,' observed Kate, somewhat pettishly, 'perhaps as we don't seem to agree, we had better drop the conversation.'

And so the conversation dropped—but not out of Matthew's mind.

Kate had expressed her sympathy with fussy, pushing, elbowing men; and at the same time that Matthew reflected that he himself was not such a man, his mind brooded over the fact that she had pointed to Stopp as presenting a case which proved that her sympathy was a well-grounded one. Certainly Stopp could hardly be described as what is commonly meant by 'fussy'; he was too ponderous for that, but he was pushing and elbowing, and though he was not noisy he was inordinately fond of being listened to, so on the whole he came under the category for which Kate professed sympathy.

Stopp had always aimed low and at something within easy distance; thus, unadventurous stage by unadventurous stage he had advanced, slowly but surely; and thus with a narrow understanding

and with narrow aspirations he had arrived at something far better than that which he had set his eyes upon at starting.

Matthew had always aimed high, and in many adventurous flights had often missed advantages which spirits of feeble wing would have certainly encountered, and most greedily seized on; and so, however high might be the mental gains which he had acquired, his material harvests had hitherto been of the poorest.

Now it seemed to Matthew that it was precisely by the power of reaping these material harvests—these gatherings-in of the wherewithal to supply the comforts, if not the luxuries of life, that Kate was disposed to measure the merits of a man. She seemed to him to say bluntly—woman has need of many things, especially of those things which money can procure; but she is weak, man is strong, and ought to be able to win for her all she wants; if then he desires her admiration, let him place at her disposal ample means to equal, if not to surpass, her rivals; otherwise let him be reckoned among the feeble ones of earth.

How far he was right—and he was not wholly wrong; how far he was wrong—and he would have been much surprised to know how far from wholly right he was—will be seen. It will be seen how, believing his conclusions to be correct, he allowed himself to drift into a course of conduct, which aided in bringing about that unforeseen event to which other persons like himself were so surely but so unconsciously tending.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

THE idea of Kate's marrying occupied very frequently the thoughts of Richard also, but his views did not accord with those of Thatchley in general.

He would not regard the suggestion of her marrying Stopp as being anything less than preposterous; he mentally declined to conceive that her marriage with any one but Matthew could come within either the suitable or the probable order of things.

And, in a letter home, he told his mother so. The circumstance which brought out this confidence was an inquiry made by Mrs. Spike of her son, whether he didn't think there was a chance of getting his father away from the temptations to drink which turned up at every corner in London, by looking out for work for him in the country; where he might have a garden and fowls, and, perhaps, a pig and a donkey, to amuse himself with out of working hours: he used to keep a donkey to ride on to jobs that lay distant, as well as keeping fowls and a pig, in those happier days before they went up to London—worse luck.

To this inquiry Richard answered that his mother might rest assured that he would keep his eye open; and, assured his mother

was, for, as she said,—‘Richard was that wide-awake and up-to-things, you must look very sharp round the corner to see anything before he saw it ;’—and he added that ‘there would very likely be a marriage before long between You-know-who and the Young Un, and that then, for certain, if not sooner, there would be a chance of a tidy job for his father.’

Whether the boy—if ever there was a time when one so precociously versed in the human nature that came within his observation could properly be designated a boy—whether he, with his keen perception—sharpened not by education but hard necessity—had noticed infinitesimal signs which had escaped duller visions ; or whether personal affection or personal interest exercised an overwhelming influence over his mind ; this is certain, that he firmly believed that Matthew was the destined husband of Kate.

This belief he succeeded in conveying to his mother ; and thus unconsciously, like the rest, he was aiding in the production of the end.

One day his mother heard her door opened without any preceding knock ; and what she knew might always be expected when that occurred, the much-dreaded form of Mr. Raymond Filps appeared before her.

‘Is that beautiful party upstairs come in yet?’ inquired Mr. Filps.

‘Mr. Chipples, sir?’

‘Why, of course, Mr. Chipples ; you haven’t got no other beautiful party in the house, have you, Mrs. Spike ? unless it’s your specimen of a husband ; and cert’n’y he’s almost as beautiful as Chipples.’

‘No, sir, he isn’t come home yet.’

‘Well, it’s of no consequence, and so you needn’t tell him I called. I daresay I shall drop on him accidental one of these days. But now, look here, Mrs. Spike, about them arrears. I have threatened to put an execution in a good many times, haven’t I ? and I haven’t done it yet.’

‘No, sir, you’ve been very good to wait so long ; but things have been very hard of late, sir.’

‘Oh yes ; I know all about that, and you’ve got a husband who drinks, and you’re lunatic enough to keep a lodger who also drinks, and is always behindhand ; but you don’t think I can go on for ever telling that tale to the landlord instead of handing him his rent, do you ? He’ll very soon be telling me in reply that if my business consists in letting the rents fall into arrear, why, that perhaps, if he was to try, he might turn out equal to discharging that duty all by himself, without any ‘elp ; besides taking it into his head that in getting rid of me and my commission he would show that the rightful claimant to being the foregoer of his pound of flesh was ‘im and not me. And that, Mrs. Spike, with all due deference to your specimen of a husband, and your beautiful choice of a lodger, is a state of pickle in which I object to find myself.’

'Yes, Mr. Filps, sir, I know you've been very forbearin' on a poor woman.'

'Poor woman, indeed!—yes, that's what you're always flinging in my face when you can't pay. Haven't I been accepting only half-rent as an instalment every week for three months past, without your ever reducing a farthing of the old arrears?'

'Yes, sir, you have indeed been very good to me in helpin' me to keep a roof over our heads; and if you are a little hard in your words, sir, everybody knows you've got a 'art as can feel at times for the poor.'

'Well, never mind that. What you must understand is this, Mrs. Spike, them arrears have got to be paid off, and your rent in future has got to be paid up regular and in full.'

'But, Mr. Filps, sir—'

'Now, listen, there's a good woman!'

'But, Mr. Filps, sir, you don't know that I have lost the chairin' at the "Pilgrims' Rest." It was only off and on, I know, but it found us with a crust, and now and then a morsel of meat, when Spike was bringin' home next to nothin' of a Saturday night.'

'And how came you to lose it?—I thought you and Mrs. Rawlins was become such particular good friends all of a sudden.'

'It isn't her fault, sir; it's Mr. Juniper himself. He says he won't have me go cleanin' there, because it encourages Spike to go, and he won't have Spike there, because he says he won't have no disturbance in his house, which Spike is rather difficult when the drink's in him. Oh no, sir, it isn't Mrs. Rawlins; it's very vexin' to her, because Mr. Juniper, he's that watchful of her, she can't get a chance of coming to have a word with me or with Mr. Chipples without Mr. J. knowing it, which, whatever his intentions by her may be, he watches her about like a cat does a mouse.'

'So Mrs. Rawlins used to come visitin' here, did she?' inquired Mr. Filps, with keen interest—'to have a word with you and sometimes with Mr. Chipples? And what might you and him and her have found so interesting to talk about, Mrs. Spike? But stop a minute. There is something else besides the rent I came to speak of. There's a good chairin' job to be had at the address I'm now writing on this card. You go there and tell 'em I sent you, and you'll get it. It's seven mornings a week regular, with your breakfast and dinner, besides odds and ends to take home.'

'Oh, Mr. Filps, sir, you've took a load off my mind; for I didn't know where to turn to for work; and Spike has just lost another place. Oh, thank you kindly, Mr. Filps, sir, for thinking of a poor woman!'

'All right; but now, you know, them arrears has got to be worked off, and the rent in future is to be paid regular and in full.'

'Yes, sir; I hope it's to be done; it will be easier now.'

'And now, who would have thought of Mrs. Rawlins calling to enter her name in the visitors' book here, or a-dropping in friendly

like for afternoon tea now and then !' said Mr. Filps, in the bantering style upon which he so much prided himself, and which he believed to be unmatched as a means of leading up delicately to the extraction of interesting information. 'And what might it all have been about, Mrs. Spike, that you and her and the highly-fashionable Mr. Chipples may have had so interesting to chat about ?'

'Nothing particular, Mr. Filps, sir,' replied Mrs. Spike, with an expression of countenance suddenly grown uneasy.

'Nothing particular, eh, Mrs. Spike,' repeated Mr. Filps, in whose notes of sarcasm there was now heard something of a threatening sound. 'Only just fashionable calls, to say how-d'y-e-do, eh, Mrs. Spike ?'

'I don't know what she talked to Mr. Chipples about, Mr. Filps ; perhaps, sir, it *was* particular what she had to say to him.'

'Oh, it might have been particular what she had to say to *him* ? but it wasn't by no means particular what she had to say to *you* ? And so you wasn't aware of how much I know about Mrs. Rawlins, and you've took me all along for a novice ? and that's all you've got to say in return for my getting you a comfortable living, Mrs. Spike ?'

'Oh no, Mr. Filps ; no, sir, you make a mistake !' exclaimed Mrs. Spike, who now began to notice that the rent-collector's face was redder even than it usually was, and that he, the terrible denouncer of feebleness in others, gave forth odorous signs of having yielded to alcoholic persuasiveness himself. 'Mrs. Rawlins only came to see me to hear how Richard was getting on. She liked to hear me read his letters home.'

'Oh, that's what she used to come for, is it ? And, Richard, he never happened to mention, in his letters home, a certain harchy-tectural party he's employed by, did he ? You've told me Richard still keeps on with that party, I think ?'

'Mr. Matthy, sir ; oh yes, sir !' replied Mrs. Spike, who seemed very glad to turn the conversation, 'Richard is still with him, and always mentions him ; and a good kind master to my poor boy he is, and I only hope he'll have the good luck Richard foretells for him, which he deserves a rich and 'andsome and good kind wife, if ever anybody ever did.'

'That's what he's thinking of, is it ?' said Mr. Filps, whose protruding eyes for an instant seemed to protrude still more. 'And what does Mrs. Rawlins say about the fine fortune Richard's master is going to drop in for—eh ?'

'She don't know of it yet, sir ; she hasn't called once since Richard began talkin' about it.'

'Oh, she don't know of it yet, don't she ?' said Mr. Filps, with exuberant delight ; 'and it's difficult for her to get a chance of seeing you and Spike and Chipples ? Well, don't fret about it, Mrs. Spike—I'm a mutual friend, as they say, between all ; and

I'll take care to let her hear news of Richard, and all he says; and so, when I drop in you needn't be afraid of chatting about his last letter. Well, good-night, Mrs. Spike—you've only got to say I sent you, and the chairin' job is yours; and as to whether you can keep it or not, why that only just depends on me.'

With which expression of mingled good-will and menace, Mr. Filps bustled out, leaving Mrs. Spike to wonder what might have made the terrible house-agent take to manifesting so suddenly this surprising amiability.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

THE satisfaction arising from what he regarded as an important discovery, being added to the excitement generated by the odorous stimulant he appeared to have taken, infused such liveliness into Mr. Filps's muscular system, that he was impelled, while strutting jauntily along under the gas-lamps, to practise, among numerous other movements, a series in which the exercise of the broadsword was combined with the flourishes of a musician's wand.

So, walking for a few minutes behind a policeman, Mr. Filps went through an airy performance representing, as if to the sound of soothing music, the thrusting through and through, the cleaving in upward and downward directions, and the final decapitation of the pacer of the flagstones. Presently, however, the latter becoming aware of the air about his ears being very strangely troubled, turned suddenly and swiftly round at the moment when Mr. Filps was delivering his most effective cut. The constable was so astounded at what he saw, that before he had time to ask for an explanation, Mr. Filps had escaped from the consequences of his daring conduct by disappearing into the distant gloom.

Coming next upon a boy of the trouser-age, who in the course of executing an errand had left off whistling for a moment to stoop down and try over once again in private a certain operation performed with two 'alley-taws;' Mr. Filps with his cane tapped this loitering youth so smartly over a tightly-covered part of his person, that the afflicted player sprang to his feet with electrical promptness, and urgently demanded what he, Mr. Filps, meant.

Mr. Filps parried this embarrassing request by pointing to a small parcel on the ground, and saying,—

'Your mother's a-lookin' for you round the corner, and she wants to know when them herrings are a-comin'.'

Having seen the youthful loiterer, deceived by this specious statement, hastily gather up his marbles, with the parcel, and scurry off, Mr. Filps, with a mind still more exhilarated by the successful issue of his last encounter, pursued his gamesome way until he reached the 'Pilgrims' Rest.'



Peeping into one of its many screened-off compartments, and seeing it empty, he slipped stealthily in and peered about until his glance met that of Mrs. Rawlins. The manageress, attracted by a significant motion of his head and eyebrows, approached, and received from him an order for a glass of gin-and-water, and at the same time a communication to the effect that he wanted to have a word with her.

Having watered the spirit to his taste, he looked round to satisfy himself that none of Mr. Juniper's smart young men were in too close proximity to himself, and then leant forward, and said in an almost inaudible whisper,—

'Is the guv'nor in?'

'Who?'

'Juniper.'

'No; do you wish to see him?'

'No, no; what I have got to say is for you.'

Then, inviting her by another significant movement of the head and eyebrows to approach her ear as near as possible, he communicated with her in a whisper which was this time wholly inaudible.

Though the communication was inaudible, its effect on the face of the hearer was easily observable. To instant surprise at almost the first word succeeded anger, then keen interest, and finally calm reflection.

Mr. Juniper being presently seen in another part of the establishment, Mrs. Rawlins suddenly withdrew her head to a distance not so easily reached by Mr. Filps's whisper. He had consequently to adopt a more audible tone.

'All right; it's understood then,' he said; 'when anything has been heard about the harchytectural party, I'll drop in and let you know.'

'Very well,' acquiesced Mrs. Rawlins. 'And, by the way, be careful to tell Mr. Chipples that he need not trouble himself to see me until he hears from me; tell him, in fact, that he must on no account come; it only exasperates Mr. J. to see him, and nothing is gained by it.'

'You're quite right; the less a drunken party like that has to do with things the better; he might spoil everything at the last moment; he's been useful so far, but the time is come when we can do without him.'

Mr. Filps said this with an air of such dark mystery that Mrs. Rawlins moved hastily away, with a succession of uneasy nods, as if to convey to him a hint that he had better go. It might have been surmised that she was troubled with a fear that if she was seen holding too much converse with Mr. Filps, the latter also might come under Mr. Juniper's jealous ban.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE effect on Mr. Filps of the gin-and-water, superadded to the previously mentioned causes of excitement, showed itself on his again going outside, not now only in the feigned slaughtering of opponents to the sound of slow and soothing music, but also in an occasional lurch in his walk.

Suddenly a lurch, which, gentle in itself, had impetus given to it by an unexpected descent from a curbstone, brought Mr. Filps into rude concussion with some one who seemed to be under the influence of a lurch in the opposite direction. Astonishment on both sides being partly overcome, the other person said,—

‘Why didn’t you telegraph as you was a-comin’?—then I might have backed into a sidin’ until you was gone by.’

‘Why, Spike ! is that you?’

‘Well,’ replied Mr. Spike, trying to collect himself, as it were, both mentally and bodily, ‘after what’s appened, Mr. Filps, I ain’t prepared to swear on the spot that it is. Without a lookin’-glass in front o’ me, I wouldn’t undertake to swear who I am—whether I’m the engine-driver, or the stoker, or the guard, or a first-class passenger; all I feel like is, I’m one of the survivors from a railway accident.’

‘But you know *me*, Spike?’

‘I seem to recollect havin’ seen you somewhere afore, guv’nor,’ said Mr. Spike; ‘but,’ he added, with a sudden hope of enlightenment showing in his face, ‘there is a public-house opposite, kep’ by people as ought to know us; suppose we go over there and see if they can help us to identify one another.’

Mr. Spike having satisfied himself over the way as to the identity of himself and of Mr. Filps, readily accepted from the latter the offer of a restorative.

‘Now,’ said he to Mr. Filps, ‘I ain’t like one o’ them uncultivated cabmen, which, when you’re goin’ over a crossin’ on foot, they rush straight for you at ten mile an hour, and then yells out, “Now then, stupid, who’re you runnin’ into?”—and which, when you’ve escaped with your life, by the nearest shave, and no thanks to them, they turn round and cuss you up hill and down dale, makin’ nasty observations about what you looks like, and a hintin’ there must have been somethin’ wrong with you when you was born—I ain’t like one o’ them bad-mannered coves, guv’nor; if I ’appens to do anythink what ain’t received agreeable; for instance, if I ’appens accidental to sit down on a party’s best Sunday ’at, or—well, it do occur sometimes—break a long clay pipe atween a party’s teeth—and it ain’t pleasant, I’ll admit, when you’ve just broke it to the right length, and got it goin’ easy;—if I ’appens awk’ard-like to do anythink o’ that sort, that ain’t no reason for flyin’ into a ill temper; I takes it cool and makes myself pleasant;—that’s the thing.

guv'nor, keep cool and make yourself agreeable ;—if I'd only done it all my life !—and if the party says it don't matter, and proposes a glass, why, I accept straight off, just to show I don't bear no malice. Well, guv'nor, 'ere's your 'ealth once again, and many more times in the future, I 'ope.'

And Mr. Spike, having ascertained that as concerning the rule of conduct he had just laid down, his own ethics were in exact accord with Mr. Filps's, continued looking at his empty glass.

'And if the injured party wants to make quite sure you ain't offended, and proposes one more on the top o' that, well, I don't put any obstacle in the way. I makes myself pleasant, and says, "With all my 'art."'

Mr. Filps, having afforded the further gratification thus hinted at, commenced the conversation he had had in view from the moment of collision.

'Spike,' said he, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, 'I'm glad of having fell in with you this evening, because I wanted particular to drop a word in your ear.'

'Ah !' exclaimed Mr. Spike, imitating, as nearly as possible, the other's air of tiptoe caution. 'Well, we've known one another long enough now, haven't we, guv'nor, to know whether we can trust each other or not ?'

'There's my 'and on it, Spike,' returned Mr. Filps, into whose brain unusually repeated recourse to gin and water was now infusing a sense of the warmest friendship with mankind at large, certain individuals alone excepted ; 'and you know whether or not I've always stood your friend.'

'I do, guv'nor,' said Mr. Spike, limiting himself to this response as being one which left him uncommitted one way or the other. 'I ought to know by this time, guv'nor.'

'Now, look here, Spike, what you've got to do is this, you're going to altogether stop showing yourself at the "Pilgrims' Rest," just as your missis and just as old Chipples are going to stop doing.'

'What for, guv'nor ?'

'One reason what for is, Juniper won't have you there ; and another reason what for is, you want to oblige me, eh, Spike ? I haven't been as hard on you about them arrears as I might have been, you know, Spike.'

'All right, guv'nor, I always tries, as I tell you, to make myself agreeable.'

'And you'll always take care, when Richard writes 'ome about a certain harcheytectural party he's along with, to let me know all he talks about.'

'And what am I going to get out of all that, eh, guv'nor ?'

'Well, now, Spike, you don't mean to say I *have* been 'ard about them arrears, do you ? And, besides, won't it give us a frequent opportunity of taking a friendly glass together ?'

'That's true, guv'nor,' replied Spike, with a brightened look. 'But, guv'nor, what's it all about? If I'm in it, I don't ought to have nothin' 'id from me, eh, guv'nor?'

'It wouldn't do you a penn'orth o' good to know what it's about, Spike. It don't in no way concern you. It's a strange business, Spike, that's what it is; but it don't in no way affect you, except that if you show yourself willing to do me a good turn, you may always know you've got a friend in me, and that I sha'n't be too 'ard on you about them arrears, and we shall often have a chance of a friendly glass.'

'All right, guv'nor, you can count on me; and I don't want to go pryin' into what don't concern me. But it's a strange business, is it, guv'nor?'

'Spike,' said Mr. Filps, with solemnity, 'the 'And of Destiny is in it, and I'm bein' shoved along by Fate!'

'Is it as bad as that, guv'nor? Well, you take my advice; anybody in that state ought to take care of the system, and keep hisself up, and not be afraid of this.'

And Mr. Spike pointed to the newly-emptied glasses, over which, when they were refilled, he and Mr. Filps renewed to each other pledges of lasting friendship.

'You stick to me, Spike, and I'll stick to you.'

Mr. Filps, of course, spoke metaphorically in reference to their future action concerning that 'architectural party'; but the remark might have been supposed, by an uninformed hearer, to be meant literally; for on going outside each seemed to feel the necessity of placing considerable reliance on the other's shoulder.

In parting at Mr. Filps's doorstep, the carpenter gave an emphatic assurance that the former should not have to stand still in what he was doing, whatsoever that might be, for the want of communications respecting the 'architectural party.'

And the word thus passed was kept. Mr. Spike showed the promptest energy in apprising Mr. Filps of the contents of Richard's last letter. He did more. Finding his son's correspondence wanting as much in frequency as in amplitude, and finding also that his own craving for inward restoration was usually much more than his means were capable of gratifying, he not seldom called upon his imagination to furnish him with that excuse for provoking Mr. Filps's hospitality which was not forthcoming from Richard.

With this result, that Mr. Filps became the frequent bearer to Mrs. Rawlins of very surprising pieces of information.

And so it was that Mr. Spike also was unknowingly lending a hand in bringing on the unforeseen event.

## CHAPTER XIV.

RICHARD was not a boy to promise his utmost and then to do his least. He had undertaken to watch the moment for providing his father with an opening in life, and so bringing about a probability of his mother and brother and sister being made more comfortable; and no sooner was the moment come than he opened his mind to Matthew. The latter answered hopefully, and seized the first opportunity of taking Kate's views on the matter.

Kate's views were Richard's; so, through the efforts of Spike the younger, Spike the elder was to be removed from the confined area lying under the shadow of a London gin-shop into the remotest outskirts of a breezy tract of country land, where three miles at least would lie between the village inn and his own doorstep.

'It is an experiment,' commented Mrs. Parlbly, who was present on the occasion, 'and it is one that deserves to succeed.'

'If it does succeed,' said Matthew, with a laugh, 'it will be an argument in favour of a "Local Option" Act being passed.'

'Ah, yes,' observed Kate, 'for putting into the hands of a certain majority in any given locality the power of prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks there.'

'Well,' replied Matthew, 'if not for prohibiting the sale of such drinks entirely, at least for prohibiting the licensing of houses of entertainment where not only the sale, but an immediate consumption on the spot is authorised,—consumption on the premises being believed by many to promote excessive consumption.'

'Do you think such a measure would succeed?' inquired Kate.

'By itself—certainly not, I think,' replied Matthew, with considerable diffidence. 'Something else is required.'

'What?'

'That which no Act of Parliament can supply: individual self-control.'

'But that which an Act of Parliament and many Acts of Parliament can well help to support and make easier,' added Kate.

'Exactly,' said Mrs. Parlbly.

'Perhaps,' said Matthew.

'Well, we must see,' said Kate, 'what the result of this small experiment of ours turns out to be: we have no banned district to put Spike into; but we can try the effect, as an experiment, of placing him as far as possible from the nearest inn.'

'With constant encouragement given to him,' remarked Mrs. Parlbly, 'I think we shall succeed.'

'Well, that is a matter,' said Kate, looking with a significant smile towards Matthew, 'which will very soon naturally fall within Mrs. Parlbly's own sphere of action.'

Mrs. Parlbly gave a gentle laugh, and Matthew, seeing her face suffused with a bright blush, remarked to himself that she still

looked in the full vigour, if not in the freshest bloom, of life. He turned to Kate with a glance of inquiry.

"Auntie," as I used to call her, is going to become Mrs. Rector, or Mrs. Vicar, or Mrs. Incumbent, or in fact Mrs.—whatever Mrs. Maybright will be. You didn't know?"

'Not on trustworthy information before.'

'Well, you have now an opportunity of congratulating her.'

'And I do so joyfully,' said Matthew, turning to Mrs. Parlyb; 'but, profound as is my esteem, I may even say my affection, for Mr. Maybright, I will venture to say that he is the one most to be congratulated.'

'That is very pretty, indeed,' returned Mrs. Parlyb with a gracious smile of acceptance; for she always graciously acknowledged the homage of what, with sarcastic reflection on the present generation, is sometimes called old-fashioned courtesy.

'Some foolish person,' remarked Kate, 'has been ill-natured enough to whisper to the future Mrs. Maybright that the proposed union is causing great indignation in certain quarters.'

'Why should it cause indignation?' asked Matthew.

'Because "auntie" has been in the habit of going—'

'To what is called a Meeting House,' completed Mrs. Parlyb.

'I, for one, laugh at such an objection,' said Kate.

'Well, I suppose that, as a rule,' observed Matthew, who thought it useless to pretend not to see that his own opinion was being sought, 'it is most generally found convenient to all concerned that marriages should be—well, I say usually—arranged between persons of not only about the same social position but also of about the same religious views: I take that to be a rule which usually it is convenient and desirable to conform to; but I suppose there may very well be exceptions to that rule; especially among cases where the parties have passed from the age of blind enthusiasm to the age of cool reflection—to the age, I mean, where reciprocal self-control is likely to be easier of exercise.'

'And in this case,' remarked Kate, in mild mockery of what she regarded as a somewhat too coldly philosophical contemplation of the question, 'the persons are not only of "about" the same social position; they are also of "about" the same religious views; inasmuch as the future Mrs. Maybright will as readily go to the church as to the Meeting House. Am I right, "auntie?"'

'Quite right, dear,' replied Mrs. Parlyb; 'at least, I can say so with regard to your last assertion. Just as I can go to the chapel because there is nothing of high moment which I am called upon to forego or recant, so I am able to go to church, because there is nothing of high moment to which I feel myself obliged to object.'

'And now, having a long letter to finish for this afternoon's post,' observed Kate, 'you will both excuse me.'

## CHAPTER XV.

MRS. PARLBY, waiting until Matthew returned to his seat after opening the door for Kate, said, in a lowered tone, but instantly, and as if she was glad of being able now to continue an interesting subject with him alone,—

‘There is, however, one exception to what I have just said in connection with our church here. You know,’ she broke off, with a smile, ‘we none of us ever make any excuse for worrying you with our troubles; now, I am anxious to do my utmost to smooth down sectarian differences, to heal old wounds, and I am very hopeful of bringing about, in my new position, more of the feeling of mutual conciliation and toleration—’

‘That was the idea which,’ interrupted Matthew, ‘occurred to me at the first mention I heard made of the probability of the marriage.’

‘That is what I am hopeful of doing,’ resumed Mrs. Parlby, continuing in that fragmentary style so frequently fallen into by persons who, eagerly desirous of saying something, yet labour under a keen sense of its having to be approached gently and, as it were, with excuses; ‘that is what I propose we should undertake to do, and we have reason, I think, to hope for success; but—and now I am going to take you into my confidence—there is one direction in which I seem to see signs of trouble to our cause: these proceedings of young Mr. Gregory Gurgoyle, the curate—’

‘I know, I know,’ said Matthew.

‘His proceedings are too much for even the most conciliatory of—well, of those with whom I have been for many years most intimately associated. I see there that which I fear may be by many regarded as a danger-post, causing them to turn back in the path they have been induced to enter towards conciliation.’

‘But Mr. Maybright, in his gentle, unreproachful way, keeps a firm hand over the proceedings in church.’

‘Yes, but he cannot live for ever; and though *we* can have every confidence in Kate as presenter to the living, there may be others who would fear that even her opinions might turn in the distasteful direction.’

‘Well, in the mean time, at least—’

‘In the mean time,’ interrupted Mrs. Parlby, ‘people are talking of many things at which they shake their heads. Mr. Maybright, it is true, exercises, with regard to the proceedings in church, a restraining hand to some extent—he is too indulgent to go to the full extent of his power; but young Mr. Gregory Gurgoyle and his little knot hold private meetings, gatherings in secret, at strange hours—’

‘Oh yes, yes,’ broke in Matthew; ‘they are sorry, no doubt, they haven’t a dark crypt where they could play at being refugees.’

'But, I can assure you, several young women—and young women of all grades in the neighbourhood—have enrolled themselves as his followers, and they are carrying with them as many of the young men as possible.'

'Yes,' replied Matthew, 'several young women with nothing to do, and several young men who, to escape the trouble of thinking, are only too glad to allow themselves to be led, especially by young ladies whom they admire.'

'But they say it is spreading,' said Mrs. Parlby.

'It is catching, no doubt, with certain people,' replied Matthew; 'but in healthy organisations it takes very mildly; and with them it passes off, sooner or later, leaving them none the worse for it—perhaps all the better, for having looked at a subject from more than one point of view.'

'Now, you are growing satiric,' remarked the lady, with a sad smile; 'and you know I am so averse to satire being introduced into matters of religion. And, after all, do you think satire can do any good in such a matter?'

'I don't know that satire in any matter ever hoped to cure; its aim is to deter.'

'Well, let us be sparing of it in this case, at least, for we are talking of what involves one whom—and now I am going to take you still further into my confidence—one whom I love very dearly, my poor dear Pattie. Poor child, she seems to have been drawn into it irresistibly, without one of us ever thinking of her, and advising her.'

'Don't reproach yourself. You have been taken by surprise, and are not to blame. This sort of thing goes on very secretly, and there are certain mental organisations very open to be taken by it. After all, is it a matter of any consequence? I don't suppose she will work for the general good with any the less ardour, or with any the less utility than she does now; in fact, as you know, that party sets up for being very hard-working.'

'I think it *is* of consequence,' replied Mrs. Parlby; 'because these extreme proceedings, of however little importance they may be in themselves, have the effect, I fear, in some cases, of frightening back those who are otherwise willing to advance towards conciliation.'

'You don't presume, in fact, to say that those proceedings are certainly wrong. You only fear that they may be deterrent to a wish for conciliation.'

'Exactly. Now, poor dear Pattie seems to have accepted these proceedings as not only absolutely right but necessary.'

'They talk dreamily of the *beauteous*, or the *mystic*, or the *æsthetic*, where we are content to talk of the *decent*, or the *convenient*, or the *becoming*; and all these adjectives of theirs she confounds with the word *essential*.'

'She insists upon the importance of—well, you know how I shudder at anything approaching irreverence—but on the import-



ance of what I call—really, I don't like to be harsh—but of what, I am bound to confess, seem to me to be—now really, don't you think so?—trifles.'

'Between you and me, they seem to my mind—we may be wrong—but, with every desire, and with every effort to get at their essence, I cannot see that they are anything but trifles.'

'She is full of curious talk about the superiority of an embroidered and variegated stole to an unadorned black one for the clergyman's wear, of the necessity of the 'eastward position,' and of the elevation of the elements—in fact, of the beauty of symbols in religion; and her conversation sometimes becomes quite architectural, so that reredos, and rood-lofts, and lady-chapels, and so forth, are things to which her mind seems to be continually turning.'

'Why, you know,' observed Matthew, 'the movement has really quite as much of architecture in it as of religion. Certain people have their minds attracted to the contemplation of mediæval architecture; and if they are persons with whom the emotional and imaginative mood is more frequent than the reasoning one, their contemplation is very apt to induce the monkish or the nunnish mood. If this state of mind leads to useful labour—all well and good! but we know perfectly well that it often degenerates into mere mediæval madness; a mild complaint, which, as I say, in healthy organisations soon passes off.'

'I hope it will be so with poor Pattie,' said Mrs. Parlbly. 'What is best to be done for her?'

'The best thing that could happen to her, I think,' replied Matthew, 'is marriage with a man who could win her deep admiration.'

'I have no doubt you are right,' remarked Mrs. Parlbly, with a smile.

'Women are, I suppose, more likely than men to be found in the class of persons I just referred to as persons with whom the emotional and imaginative mood is more frequent than the reasoning one—and happy for man that it is so; now, it is not only that our friend is a woman, and a woman of this sort, but her case is a most pronounced one. The strongest mood with such a woman is admiration—intense admiration. It is a pity that so much wealth of feeling should be wasted in the contemplation of inanimate objects, under the delusive belief that such revery must necessarily lead to that chastened frame of mind to which we should all aspire. Now, it more often happens that, instead of that purified atmosphere being reached, nothing results but a condition of morbidness, with which the patient grows so sick that, happily, nature overburdened at length rises in rebellion, and throws off the unwholesome humour. It would be well if some of this admiration took the healthful shape of active love for husband and children; life was never meant for the barrenness of silent, motionless ecstasy.'

CHAPTER XVI.

'BUT they say,' said Mrs. Parlby, 'that it is a most difficult thing now-a-days for women to find husbands.'

'Probably: and there seem to be reasons for it,' returned Matthew; 'but most young women have fathers or brothers, who are made all the happier for a woman's affectionate care, and all the better for a woman's gentle influence.'

'I wonder why it is getting so difficult,' observed the lady, 'for girls to get married now-a-days.'

'Well, after all,' replied Matthew, 'a vast number of them do get married. As for the others—you know that the tastes and habits of all classes of society have become less simple than they were. A great many things are charged to the railways, and amongst other things the railways are to be held accountable, I suppose, for the wide spread of towny ideas and artificiality in general.'

'That means—doesn't it—the general increase of expense?'

'Yes, the feverish search after pleasures which are beyond your means, instead of the calm enjoyment of those which lie at your own door, as they say.'

'But how does that affect marriage?'

'Well, it affects marriage only amongst many other things. And as for marriage in particular, it may be remarked that, on the one hand, young men having more expensive habits than formerly, look for more money, and, on the other hand, that fathers, with the same more expensive habits, do less and less towards providing marriage portions for their daughters. In France, parents are, as a rule, very careful in putting by something for starting their children in life, and there they even have provident associations formed for the assurance of a marriage portion being forthcoming when it is wanted.'

'It is a part of the bold enterprise which characterises English people, not to worry themselves too much about the possible exigencies of a rainy day,' observed Mrs. Parlby, who was jealous of the reputation of her race; 'their strong reliance on their own powers of helping themselves leads them to count in regard to the future less cautiously than some might think they ought to do.'

'Then,' continued Matthew, 'the number of portionless girls is greatly increased, I believe, by the fact that so many of the artisan classes, instead of bringing up their sons to manual work, think it desirable to enable them to follow what are foolishly regarded as more genteel employments; in pursuing which, the sons generally earn less than they could have done in a manual trade, and have less simple tastes to satisfy: from the class thus created come hosts of young women who, with the most amiable dispositions and the best intentions, find themselves, in their own opinion, stranded in life; because their bringing-up has made them too proud to do domestic work for hire, while they have nothing of marketable value except domestic work to offer.'

'But what a pity it is,' said Mrs. Parlby, 'that with such boundless tracts of fertile land in English colonies only waiting to be utilised there should be such a want of means to marry and live comfortably, amongst so many of our countrymen. Why is not emigration promoted more than it is?'

'Emigration will not be promoted on any sufficiently large scale until it ceases to be left to what, for the most part, you may call merely private companies, until it becomes a great national scheme undertaken by Government; but for the present, Government always seems to have its hands too full already; and, again, the wealthy classes, the great employers of labour, don't desire to do anything likely to increase the cost of labour.'

'But when is all this to be better?'

'When hand-workers are able to insist on the over-supply of them being helped to emigrate under a national scheme; and when young men, too genteelly brought-up to have what is called "a trade between their fingers," and at the same time destitute of an adequate compensatory share of what is called superior education, shall confess to themselves their want of manual skill on the one hand, and their want of mental acquirements on the other, and shall in consequence go out to the colonies, not with the hope of finding employment on an office stool, but with a stern determination to learn how to use their hands—'

'To what end?'

'To the end of earning the small beginnings by which with strengthened and sharpened intellects they may be able to do that which, emasculated and impoverished, they were unable to do at home.'

'But there are some of the class you speak who are not free to act as they would like.'

'Quite so; and I don't for a moment intend what I have said to refer to those who, anxious to emigrate, are yet held back by claims which are too urgent to be met with a mere prospect of help.'

'And it seems to me that one result of what you advise would be, that the girls at home would be left still more to themselves: half the young men of the country would be going out and finding wives in the colonies.'

'I think not: many of them would send home for the girls they had left behind them, to go out, and many, failing to find wives abroad, would come back to the old country for them. The female population in the colonies is, you know, disproportionately low.'

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

'WELL,' said Mrs. Parlby, with a laugh, 'our conversation has been an extensive one, hasn't it?—dealing with two important questions of the time: one of the religious difficulties, and then the marriage difficulty.'

'And in both of them our friend is concerned,' returned Matthew, laughing also; 'the discussion began in connection with her: let it finish so.'

'In what way?'

'In our talking about a husband for her.'

'Do you wish to recommend one?' inquired Mrs. Parlby, scrutinising him keenly.

'Oh, I am not thinking of myself,' replied Matthew promptly. 'But I do wish to recommend some one—some one who is head and ears in love with her.'

'Who is it?' inquired the lady, her face beaming with feminine eagerness to know that she was right.

'Well,' began Matthew, with affected hesitation, feeling sure that she knew.

'It's Mr. Gurgoyne—Mr. Jack Gurgoyne, as he is called.'

'Yes.'

'But—'

'You mean—is he a man a girl might trust herself to? I believe so. He is as gentle as a woman; and though he is keenly sensitive to a spiteful intention manifested against himself, his mind is too broadly cast ever to permit petty spite to be practised by him. He is the most amiable of men.'

'But—'

'You wish to ask,' continued Matthew, 'do I think him steady enough to have a woman's happiness confided to him? I reply, that nothing but a woman's loving influence will ever give him ballast.'

'Yes, but—'

'You would suggest, perhaps, that though his energy is great, it is not sufficiently sustained to ensure his making his way. My belief is, that in the stimulus of a growing desire to hold fast the admiration of the most cherished of companions, and in part to repay her devotion, he would find that which would make inaction a misery to him.'

'But still—' began Mrs. Parlby.

'You are doubtful of his religious state,' again interrupted Matthew; 'well, I will venture to say that though in unimportant matters he undoubtedly has a marked prejudice for those sects which, in his opinion, most favour architecture, yet, in matters of the last consequence, his views are the views of every sect—of every Christian sect, at least.'

'Yes, but his pecuniary position,' again began Mrs. Parlby, with hesitation. 'Now, Mr. Stopp has reached an assured condition of what the gently bred—leaving out those who are too exacting—may regard as one of fair comfort: he is, as Mr. Chamfer's partner, in practice himself, as they say; but Mr. Gurgoyne—'

That was the indispensable test—the money-power of the man. Matthew had said to himself that it always was so, and he had said so to his friend Jack; and both had said it was right that it always

should be so. And how did things stand in this case? The plodding Mr. Stopp, with no lofty aspirations to take off his attention from what happened to come in the way of his feet; but, on the contrary, with a mind conceiving and aiming at small things only, and with a never-failing vigilance in spying out, and a never-failing perseverance in turning to advantage, the small opportunities possible to his small powers, had made his way in this world—had reached, in fact, the coveted 'condition of what the gently-bred—leaving out those who are too exacting—might regard as one of fair comfort.'

And Jack Gurgyle—the brilliant Jack—the man of bright conception and swift execution—where was he?

'He is, at the least, ten years younger than Mr. Stopp,' said Matthew in apology; 'Mr. Stopp must certainly be turned forty.'

'But at thirty—' began Mrs. Parlbly.

'At thirty my friend may be considered to be doing tolerably well. There is always plenty of what is called stock work for him on this estate, if he likes to do it; and he has the certain prospect of being called on to see his plans for the restoration of the church here carried out; and, as I am delighted to learn, his designs for the new church at Carborough—rather a costly undertaking—have been accepted.'

'Capital, capital!' murmured Mrs. Parlbly.

'He will have to set up an office in Carborough,' continued Matthew; 'and, what with one thing and another, his reputation will spread—it sha'n't be my fault if it doesn't.'

'Capital, capital!' murmured Mrs. Parlbly again. 'I am so delighted to hear he is really getting on.'

'Well, now you know for certain what I fancy you have suspected all along—this secret attachment of his.'

'He has not yet spoken to Pattie?' inquired the lady.

'No. He is still afraid of getting *No* for answer, and of the possibility of putting an end to the acquaintance; and he has very modest ideas as to how his pecuniary standing would be regarded, even though it is greatly improved and still goes on improving. But I hope I may count on your good offices for him.'

'But what can I do for him?'

'Well, it is in your power to assist in bringing him into more frequent and more intimate conversation with the young lady. He says he never can get an opportunity of speaking to her except in the hearing of persons who are not favourably disposed towards him, and who, he thinks, are always watching him. The truth is, it seems to me, that in this matter his usual boldness has deserted him. However, I shall hope he has got you on his side.'

The good lady made no reply, but she gave him her hand when he took his leave.

She had made no promise, but he went away with a strong hope that the seed he had planted would flourish, and to his friend Jack's advantage.

'Mrs. Parlbly, with the finer perception and the easier invention of a woman,' he said to himself, 'will succeed, perhaps, in getting poor Pattie out of the difficulty into which my stupidity led her, and at the same time give Jack an opportunity of unburdening his mind. Poor Jack!—he is bold enough in most things, but in this he seems to have lost all his customary assurance. The doubtfulness of the issue, so far as he has been able to predict the issue, appears to unnerve him. Well, after all, it may be mere consistency of ideas; he thinks himself capable of so much, and worthy of so much, and he soars at so much, that perhaps he thinks other people expect as much from him as he expects from himself; or else it is an inherent modesty in his character that nobody, I will swear, ever suspected him of; otherwise he would see perfectly well that a man with his talents, with the professional standing he has already gained, and with the prospects he can very confidently point to, may, without any ridicule attaching to it, make an offer to a girl in Pattie's position. But he is too much afraid of that possible *no*.'

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. JOHN GURGOYLE, the rising young architect, being gone away for some three or four days, in order personally to superintend the important beginnings of his first great work, the new church at Carborough, and to carry out the concomitant and equally great project, already hinted at, of setting himself up in an office in that borough; Matthew was precluded from immediately imparting to his friend the new hope inspired by the preceding conversation.

He lost no time, however, in telling Richard to write to his father that work was awaiting him at Thatchley. The carpenter was also to be informed that a low-rented cottage at Common Side was offered to him, and that he had better come at once and get it ready for the time when he should be in a position to enable his wife and family to join him.

What was Richard's joy at the thought of having his mother and his little brother and sister within walking distance, and of seeing them grow strong and ruddy in the bracing air of Thatchley Common;—his mother with a home she could take a pride in, his father with a garden and a pigstye for his leisure hours—just as Richard had heard his mother say it used to be before ever he was born—and his brother and sister with grassy lanes to gather flowers in—what his anticipated joy in all this was could not be read in a visage so inscrutable as his; but it was remarked upon that, whilst occupied in rubbing a horse-bit into brightness, or otherwise diverting his mind, he would every now and then suddenly, and as if moved by inspiration, execute on the tips of his toes, and with much deftness of foot, a dance never before observed of human eye, but very much admired on account of the absence in it of anything like a monotonous recurrence of the same movements;—a recurrence.

which in the eyes of persons desiring to indulge in impromptu saltatory exercise, on a barn floor or a cellar-flap, for instance, is a defect common to all dances of a fashionable sort.

Matthew had carefully arranged for all such details as he thought would be most conducive to the carpenter's adopting and maintaining habits of sobriety. The conversion of an old and disused barn into a reading-room, an institution destined by Kate to competition with the village tavern in providing recreation for the people, was the first work in which Spike was to be called upon to take part. This employment had been selected for him as affording the best means of keeping him during the earliest stage of his new career as much as possible under the watchful eye of Matthew, and the still more watchful organ of Spike the younger.

Short as was the course from the new building to the inn, it was such that no one could traverse it without coming under Richard's observation, if it happened, and thenceforth it happened rather frequently, that he was cleaning anything at that harness-room window, from which it was his habit to contemplate the daily life of Thatchley. He now knew everybody in the place, and having become intimately acquainted with the routine of the several centres of occupation there, he was generally able, on seeing an inhabitant of the neighbourhood, to surmise with accuracy, not only where the latter had just come from, but also where he was going to, and what he was going about.

Richard had, in fact, always manifested an observation and a vigilance in all things so keen, that Matthew now felt quite assured of being warned in time of the slightest sign of the elder Spike being in danger of falling back into evil ways. The father had sunk into too feeble a state to be able for the present to walk in a cleanly course alone, and he would need the vigilance and guidance of his son to keep him straight.

'And how difficult it is to keep straight in that matter,' thought Matthew, 'I myself, know too well. But I will lend a hand with the rest in helping him to do it; and he will do it, no doubt. He will leave all the foul associations of years behind him, when he turns his back on the town, and here he will find everything fresh and bright: a new life will dawn upon him: he will begin well, and we must keep him from falling away from a good beginning.'

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

THUS cogitating, as he was walking homewards one dark February night, he suddenly became aware of the stillness of the night being broken in upon by a sound of voices in loud dispute.

'A row at Checkers,' he thought; 'I must tell him to be careful, or he will get his licence endorsed.'

Matthew quickened his step and approached the village inn,

easily recognisable in the general darkness by the ruddy light streaming from the upper and uncurtained half of its lower windows.

A man was beating loudly at the closed door, and hoarsely demanding to be admitted on an instant threat of going for the constable.

Surprised to see any one encountering so much difficulty in gaining admission to a house opened expressly for the entertainment of the village at large, he was still more surprised to find on getting nearer that the person thus barred from the establishment was no other than the proprietor of the place—the inn-keeper himself.

‘Why, what is all this about?’ inquired Matthew.

‘Is that you, sir?’ murmured the landlord with relief. ‘I’m very glad you happened to be passin’, sir.’

‘Why, what is it, Checkers?’

‘Now, sir, do you mean to say it isn’t a burnin’ shame,’ asked the landlord, ‘that a man should not only have the management of his own business took out of his own hands, but should actually be turned out of his own house and have his own door slammed in his face?’

‘Who is doing all this, Checkers?’

‘And then, when he’s a-standin’ outside with nothing but the sky over his cap, and nothing but these cobble-stones under his feet,’ continued the inn-keeper, moving his slippered extremities uneasily, ‘to be warned to take care how he behaves hisself for fear of wuss befallin’ him! I should think it’s very near as wuss as it can be!’

‘Who is the cause of all this?’ again asked Matthew, with an effort to make himself heard above the din that rose and fell inside.

‘A tramp, I think, sir; a downright vagabond to look at: he says he’s a friend o’ yours—beggin’ your pardon, sir.’

‘What does he look like?’ inquired Matthew, with immediate suspicion of the truth.

‘Well, sir,’ takin’ a favourable view of him, he might be a carpenter lookin’ for work: takin’ a unfavourable view, and a more likely view, I should say work was the very last thing in this life he desired to come across. Askin’ your pardon, sir, if he happens to be known to you—he looks to me like nothing else in the world but an out-and-out, devil-may-care, evil-disposed character with no visible means of subsistence.’

‘But what is there in his appearance to give you the idea that he may be a carpenter?’

‘Why, sir, he wears a flannel jacket with a brown-paper cap—which he says his hat-box is a-comin’ in the mornin’ along with his portmanteau and his jewellery-case; which shows his brazen impudence, don’t it, sir? and as for any scrap of luggage he’s brought with him, it’s only a ragged old frail with nothin’ in it but a broken saw and a jack-plane with the irons out of it; and, as for there being anything else, a big hole in the bottom shows there can’t be nothing of value concealed.’



'Does he seem to have money about him?'

'Appearances are against it, sir. He don't display none; and when I hinted that trust was a bad dog, he made answer and said, he didn't see where there was any need of talkin' about trust while he could offer as a guarantee a set of instruments like what was lying hid in that basket—a-pointing, if you please, to his dirty old frail with a hole in the bottom of it; and addin' that if we—me and my missis—meant to claim them as security he should require to see where they was locked up and the key would have to be give to him; which, when we—me and the missis—said we wouldn't so much as even give house-room to such rubbish, he replied and said—all right, he'd take good care they didn't go out of his sight, for he had suspected our havin' designs on his property from the first moment he set foot on the premises: which, no doubt, he says, the police, they've got their eye on you.'

'They are getting rather noisy, don't you think?'

'It would be rather surprisin' if they wasn't, sir,' returned the landlord, folding his arms and rubbing his chin with an air of resignation. 'He's took possession of the beer-engine; and there he is a-servin' it out to 'em just as they like to call for it.'

'Why don't you try the back way?'

'He's bolted that door as well, sir; and locked the missis up in the bar-parlour; and as for the maids, they're too frightened at his talk to interfere. He says he should like to see the man as would dare stand up in front of him; why, he says, in London, says he, I sends a barman to the hospital once a-week regular, he says, and landlords in plenty.'

'I think I know something of the man you are talking about,' said Matthew; 'and I think I may guarantee your not losing anything by him. Be a little patient with him, and—'

'Patient, sir!'

'Yes, yes, you have been very patient, I know; in fact, I think you have been extremely forbearing not to send for the constable.'

'As for that, sir, I shouldn't gain much by it, I fear—another bad mark, perhaps, on my licence: they seem all against licensed victuallers, sir, now-a-days. But they're a-goin' it indoors, ain't they, sir? and me a-standin' out here in the street, frightened out o' my life for fear of the constable's comin'—which, unfortunately, he and me happen to have fell out.'

'Don't be afraid. I'll see you are not wronged. I'm a witness of what is going on.'

---

## CHAPTER XX.

'ALL right, sir. If I've only got somebody to stand by and see fair-play. But now, sir,' continued the landlord of the 'White Horse,' folding his arms still more tightly round himself, and leaning against one of the posts which were connected together

with swinging chains as a guard to the windows, 'where do you think all this talk about Local Option bills and so on is going to end? What do you think they are going to do with us poor publicans? Do you think they'll be able to stamp us out, sir?'

'If they *can* they *will*: be under no misapprehension as to that,' replied Matthew. 'I have heard an energetic and exceptionally authorised exponent of a well-known Teetotal Association explain very candidly, amidst the loud applause of very numerous adherents, the tactics in Parliament of a party advocating what is called a Local Option measure. He said that his party having recognised the impossibility of getting their original and more sweeping proposal accepted, they plucked from it one essential head which—well, not which received the most general adhesion, but which met with the least opposition; and that one essential head of their original measure they have never ceased to push with all their might to the front: it is the principle of their present proposal—Local Option.'

'Well, sir, if I may ask,' said the landlord of the 'White Horse,' 'what is it they really propose by this Local Option?'

'They say that the local question of granting and renewing licences to sell intoxicating drinks to be consumed on the premises—what *they* regard as licences to maintain public nuisances—rests with a few magistrates who are not elected by the public vote, but who are appointed by a great officer of the constitution. They say that this local question of licensing—what *they* regard as a public nuisance—should be decided by public vote in the locality, or, as some advise, by a *caucus* elected by the same vote.'

'Like members of Parliament, or the Board of Guardians and cetera,' observed the landlord, scratching his head.

'Just so,' said Matthew; 'and why should not the question of licensing public drinking-houses be decided by local vote like the election of members of Parliament and Boards of Guardians and so on?'

'It do seem feasible—it do;,' slowly remarked the landlord, removing his cap to arouse his brain with his fingers over a larger area; 'but it can't be right to go and ruin the trade like that.'

'But why should the public vote in a locality ruin the trade, as you call it; or any trade for the matter of that, any more than public election of members of Parliament ruins the country at large, or public election of Boards of Guardians ruins the poor?'

'It's no use asking me, sir; I don't know why,' replied the puzzled landlord; 'but I do know this, sir; I would sooner trust the magistrates, even if they are appointed once for all by one great man whoever he may be, than I'd trust a pack of busybodies—a set of fussy people who like to hear themselves talk; skew-headed, one-idea-d, bad-livered, cross-questioning folks, who never have any opinion of their own until they notice the generality of people have long been holding what's contrary to it: a free-and-uneasy as could never get a following big enough in any district to carry their

point unless by fussing and frothing, and by talking, and talking, and talking, they worried sensible and peaceable-minded persons into silence.'

'But the same sort of argument,' said Matthew, 'might be used against the election of members of Parliament, poor-law guardians, and others of public note. So we are brought back to the question, why should the public vote in a locality ruin the liquor trade more than that the public election of members of Parliament and poor-law guardians, for instance, should ruin respectively the country at large and the poor?'

'I don't know, sir,' repeated the landlord; 'but,' he added, doggedly, 'it would.'

'Well, I will tell you why it seems to me that it would,' rejoined Matthew. 'A public vote in the election this year of a House of Commons enforces a certain public policy for a time, but it does not bind us for all time. Experience shows us that the next parliamentary elections may modify or even reverse the policy. So also the election of one of our present local boards this year does not decide once and for ever a local question; next year the question may be differently decided. There is nothing in either case to preclude a reconsideration next year of any topic which for the time is decided on in this.'

'But,' he continued, 'if public vote in a given locality once decides against the publicans, it virtually decides against them in that locality for ever; because, when investments in the liquor trade there have been made worthless, and men in that business have been ruined by a mere breath of the popular vote *once*, no money will be risked in similar investments in that locality again. The electors of *one year* could virtually decide the question of licensing public-houses in a given locality *finally and without appeal*.'

'So they could, sir,' observed the landlord with depression.

'That is how it seems to me the public vote in the form of Local Option would ruin the liquor trade,' continued Matthew; 'and there I see not only an injustice to the publicans, but also, what is more serious, to the *public*.'

'*The public voters of one year in a locality could, by the force of circumstances, virtually balk the expression of public opinion in that locality in all subsequent years.*'

'The voters of to-day upon the question of the liquor trade in their locality could, by Local Option, close the mouths of all *future* voters in that locality on that question. The oracles of one year's successful agitation are to be the oracles for all time.'

'Why, of course, sir,' acquiesced the other; 'for what respectable licensed victualler would ever risk his money in a locality where his ruin could be brought about any year by a little extra platforming and disturbance on the part of the local spouters.'

'And you think, then,' remarked Matthew with a smile, 'that your interests are safer under the judgment of a few magistrates than under that of the inhabitants at large.'

'Why, cert'n'y, sir; gentlemen of property are less changeable in their ideas than the ratepayers at large; because the ratepayers at large are always apt to let the fussy busybodies of the place have their own way; and, as you say, sir, in parliamentary and local board elections that can be rectified. But *our* question, once decided against in a place, couldn't never be rectified, for the reason you have mentioned.'

'Bear in mind this,' said Matthew, 'whatever the Local Option party may say as to their intention being *only* to give the ratepayers of a district the power of granting or renewing this or that particular licence as may be thought fit, the real design of the party is, wherever they find a majority, or an incessantly active minority—which often means the same thing—to suppress every liquor-selling establishment in that district. Well, if there was a pretty general consent to the total suppression of the liquor trade, the practical impossibility of the rectification you speak of would be a good thing; but that pretty general consent has not yet been anywhere near arrived at.'

'And what, sir,' asked the landlord, 'do you think we licensed victuallers ought to do in the mean time?'

'Well, the best advice that could be given to publicans in general, is, I think, first, continue to keep as orderly a house as possible, a thing which, it is believed, you for the greater part do already, because it is obviously in your own immediate interest to do so. Secondly, if you don't do everything you can to discourage, at least, avoid doing anything to positively encourage, drinking which passes the narrow limits of mere refreshment, a course which you are hardly likely to pursue, unless you are forced, because it is obviously against your immediate interests to do so. Thirdly, be content with smaller profits, that is, give your customer a genuine article for his money. Your returns are the quickest in the world, therefore you ought to be satisfied with the smallest profits; and yet it is believed you make the highest. The brewers are credited with sending you sound malt liquor; don't stretch it, for you can't do it without adulteration. As for spirits, they hardly bear thinking of, much less tasting. No man who knows what good alcohol is, and who at the same time knows anything about the human stomach, would ever ask for spirits at the average drinking-place, except under the influence of a degraded desire, or of some forceful want; and even the poor wretch who drinks in ignorance cannot swallow the corroding compound without a shudder.'

'As for adulteration, sir, I'm dead set against it,' observed the landlord, but with a gulp as though he found difficulty in swallowing his own statement. 'But leaving that out, I don't see, sir, why folks should be so hard upon our way of making a living; it's a trade like any other.'

'Yes; but there is an idea, which is gaining ground every day, that it is a trade such that, while earning a living by means of it for yourselves, you hinder other people from earning theirs; that it not

only induces the working man to part with what he might put by for a rainy day, but even with a great part of that which is necessary for enabling himself and his family to live in the elevating atmosphere of decency and comfort; and that in proportion as those who practise it mount in moneyed prosperity, so do the greater masses of the people sink towards pauperism and crime.'

'That's a very heavy charge to bring against us, sir; and if we're going to be made answerable for all the pauperism and crime in the country, it's gettin' time for us to shut up shop, I suppose.'

'The public-house trade is not charged, even by unreasonable people, with *all* the pauperism and crime in the country, and very little of what is charged against it is put upon such an establishment as yours, which, intended more as a half-way house for the rest and refreshment of man and beast of all kinds on the road than as a place of recreation for those dwelling within sight of it, could not easily be dispensed with.'

'Well, sir, whatever is to be done, we shall have to do it for ourselves as a body, I suppose. It seems to me that it's no use now-a-days of a tradesman or anybody else, when he sees his interests in danger, turning to one of the gentry for protection, as he used to do. Landowners in these times deal with us tradespeople just as they would deal with people they'd never seen afore, and they deal with the working folks in just the same way. Local ties is growin' weak, sir; and, amongst others, the old feeling of friendship that existed between gentle and simple of the same locality; the boy of high degree and the boy of low degree, nat'rally of course, grew up in different states of life, but if they were both born and bred on the same property, there was always a tie between 'em, a neighbourly feeling of havin' their lots cast in the same spot and their interests lyin' pretty much in the same things; the gentleman as owner and patron, of course, and the simple person as tenant or tradesman, or useful dependent of some other sort, but both of 'em as neighbours. All that has very much changed since I was a boy, sir.'

'No doubt of it,' replied Matthew. 'Since then the lower classes, as they are called, have in all their grades claimed equal political rights with the others, and labour has got its own Acts of Parliament, and it challenges capital at every turn. Capital therefore says, "You not only profess to be able to take care of yourselves, but you constantly menace us with fresh assault. Be it so; but henceforth the contact between us will be, not that of neighbours, but that of drivers of as hard a bargain as each side can make it."'

'That's it, sir: they don't say so, and perhaps they don't think so; but that's what it's come to.'

'Country estates now-a-days,' began Matthew;—'but there still seems a good deal of excitement in-doors.'

'Never mind them, sir; they're gettin' quieter now, and it's better to give that strange party time to recover his good temper again. If you'll see it all squared between me and him to-morrow, I'll answer for the others reckonin' up pretty near the mark, sooner or later.'

'I was only going to say that, in the case of many landed estates in the country, very little more sentiment, as it is called, enters into the management and working of them now-a-days than into the management and working of a Government dockyard or of a big cotton-mill; and more is the pity. However, it wasn't to be expected that the lower classes, while gaining so much by modern legislation, were to lose nothing; but it would have been honest, I think, to have told them so.'

'And don't it seem to you, sir, that there is less indulgence for anything what isn't quite right than there used to be? People seem harder than they used to be.'

'You see the upper classes, who formerly were the arbiters in most things, used to be themselves somewhat abandoned in their mode of life, and not secretly nor half secretly, but openly in the light. Thus they felt themselves constrained, naturally, to take very lenient views of the backslidings of the masses. In these times there has sprung up a large body who cultivate, fortunately, temperance in drink in particular, and make a conspicuous display of a regard for morality in general, but who—in a vast number of cases at least—unfortunately grow up with a narrow intolerance of any views or inclinations not in exact accord with their own, and, worse than that, with such conceit of their own successful efforts to practise this or that particular virtue, which is probably easy to them, that they are led to denounce and deride those who find it very difficult to practise the same thing, and who either won't attempt the thing at all, or attempting it, frequently fail.'

'You might say that with truth, sir, of them teetotal chaps.'

'Well, the country owes a great deal to that class; but no doubt intolerance and conceit are faults which its members have reason to be on their guard against. And a miserable reflection on humanity it is, Checkers, that in general an individual cannot arrive at practising any particular virtue with success himself, but he must instantly conceive a most scathing contempt for any one else who doesn't see on the spot that he ought to aim at reaching the same point of success. But this belongs, I suppose, to our vanity. We are too fond of contrasting our own little miserable efforts in the right direction with other people's driftings in the wrong. The darker the background which their misdeeds make in the distance, the brighter our own virtuous acts shine out under our eyes.'

'You're right there, sir. But it's gettin' cold to the feet, isn't it, sir?' asked Mr. Checkers, whose thirst for knowledge seemed to be slaked by the moisture of a February night. 'Suppose we make an attempt to get inside?'

'Very well,' said Matthew, stepping back out of the light. 'Tap at the window, and see what this man has got to say.'

But before the tap could be given some one was seen to approach the window, and, the two casements being violently opened, the form of Spike the carpenter leant forward into the outer air.

## CHAPTER XXI.

FROM the opened window there came such a rush of smoke, mingled with the fumes of strong drink, that even the seasoned landlord of the 'White Horse' was unable to forbear sneezing; and through the haze could be indistinctly made out a group of villagers, wagging their heads and flourishing their pipes in drunken commendation of the newly-arrived champion of the Rights of Customers as opposed to Landlords.

The carpenter took the pipe from his mouth, and hitched the brown paper cap about his head, as certain barristers are sometimes observed to hitch their wigs preparatory to making a moving appeal to the jury, or putting a malignant and unfounded question to an innocently hostile witness.

'Well, now then, you Mr. Landlord,' he called out, 'do you think if we allow you to come indoors you can be trusted to behave yourself?'

'Open the door directly, if you don't want me to fetch the constable,' returned the landlord.

'Oh, we won't have no threats,' observed the carpenter, warningly. 'We're disposed to let you take a seat at your own fireside, if you behave yourself, but we won't have any remarks: remarks always drop into cheek, and cheek we won't have. But it ain't considered necessary to be 'ard on a first offence, and so it has been unannamously agreed and voted *nem. con.*—which, translated out of the ancient Greek, as the saying is, means, "and no mistake about it"—'

At this proof of extended knowledge, such a renewed flourishing of pipes and wagging of heads over beer-pots ensued as left no manner of doubt that, in the opinion of that assembly, the speaker was the man to be listened to in any case where a desire arose 'to know all about it,' and that a very long way indeed would have to be gone to find his match.

'It has been unannamously agreed,' continued Mr. Spike, after turning round to note the effect just described, 'that you shall be allowed to come indoors on condition you give a promise not to misbehave yourself no more, and, likewise, stand hot grogs all round, just to show you are really sorry for what you have done.'

'I haven't any reason to be sorry for what I've done,' said the landlord, 'but I may well be sorry to see such a man as you in the place.'

'I'm in my right place, I am,' retorted the carpenter. 'I'm a-keepin' you in order, and that's my right place, as one knowin' how to deal with a landlord who annoys people that patronise his house; but you, you ain't in your right place when you take upon yourself to offer remarks which are not called for. Now, what do you think you ought to have done to you for being found out of your right place—eh?'

After pausing an instant, as if for a reply, Mr. Spike went on,—

'What do they do to one of them long-eared animals—you know, one of them four-footed woodlarks what sings so sweet when they hears one of their brothers a-callin' to 'em from a distance—what do they do to him, if he goes out a-walkin' by hisself, and takes it into his head to enter another man's field and help hisself without waitin' to be asked, or if any other way he's found a-goin' where he oughtn't, or a-doin' what he shouldn't—what do they do to him? Why, they just walks him off to the pound, and leaves him there, and not with such a over-supply of carrots that he's likly to make hisself ill over 'em—yes, they leaves him locked up there until somebody comes and claims him, and pays a fine on him to get him out.'

By this time the fresh outside air had so far taken the place of the inside smoke, that the landlord of the 'White Horse' had been able to catch the eye of most of his refractory customers indoors, which act, supplemented in each case by a very significant nod of the head, seemed to be influencing the least intoxicated of the assembly in a manner that was noticeable. Certain among the heads which before had wagged in such emphatic commendation of the carpenter's proceedings, were now held still by thoughts that concerned less the immediate present than the imminent future, the dread to-morrow, when humble apologies must be tendered, and, worse than that, when heavy reckonings would have to be acknowledged, and, worst of all—especially for the wives and children—when those reckonings would have to be faced and wearily and uselessly wiped out: uselessly, for these public-house scores are written in a cunning substance which needs only to be breathed upon by the hot breath of the drunkard to come back into view, as clearly as if the sponge had never been passed over it.

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

'AND that's what you deserve to be done to,' resumed the carpenter, continuing his address to the landlord. 'You are found where you oughtn't to be, and a-doin' what you shouldn't; and consequently you ought to be put in the pound along with the donkey; but no one would ever think it worth while to go and pay a fine on you; which it would be insulting to the feelings of the dumb animal to find hisself alone in the same apartment with you, and subject to your taking the liberty, uninvited, of addressin' him.'

'I'll have the law on you for all this!' exclaimed the exasperated landlord.

'The law!' cried Spike the carpenter, derisively. 'And do you think you've got down in these parts a lawyer capable of standing up and arguing with me, or a magistrate as would dare, after hearing my layin' down of the law, to convict me? You put the whole bench of judges and all the counsellors of the law afore me, and let me talk to them, and you see what would 'appen: they wouldn't know what to make of it; they'd confess they wasn't used to it;



they'd ask for time to breathe and to reflect ; and then they'd sink down under their wigs, and be 'id from view.'

Mr. Spike here again turned round to ascertain the effect of these last remarks upon those whom he expected to find listening to him ; but he was much discountenanced on seeing in the room nothing but empty seats.

'Well, now, just you look at that !' he exclaimed, turning back towards the landlord, and in a voice intended to betoken pure and disinterested sympathy with that hardly-used person. 'Just you look at that, now ! They walks into a man's 'ouse and calls for all they likes, and then when the moment comes for goin' into figures and a-seein' how much all this treatin' of your friends comes to—which I didn't like to be unsociable when I was asked to take a drink—when it comes to settlin', they all slides off by the back way, as if they wouldn't for worlds hurt your feelin's by alloodin' to such a delicate matter.

'But look 'ere, guv'nor,' resumed the carpenter, after a pause, 'you take my word for it, people that drinks—and of course I ain't alloodin' to folks like myself as never cares to go beyond what's good for me—always exceptin' a extra occasion, like when, for instance, I've took the part of a landlord and, just by way of showin' he appreciates friendly 'elp, he asks me to take a glass with him—why, then, of course, I don't put my back up, but makes myself agreeable. No, the coves I'm talkin' of are them as never knows when they've had enough, as always wants somebody like me to keep 'em in order. Why, guv'nor, if it hadn't been for me bein' 'ere to-night, everybody would have helped hisself without stint instead o' my servin' it out to 'em regular ;—and if you want to know about what the figure was, why, you put down three pots a-piece to 'em, guv'nor, and you won't be far out ; for as to what I took,' continued the carpenter, clinging to the window-sill for support, 'well, anybody can see that wasn't nothing.'

And so, indeed, anybody with half an eye could.

'But, as I was goin' to remark, guv'nor,' resumed Spike, continuing his address to the landlord, 'people what drinks—but, look 'ere, guv'nor, now I've managed to restore order for you, and got these disorderly folks to go away peaceable and without danger to your licence, suppose you ventures to come inside of your own 'ouse, and try and squeeze into a corner by your own fireside?—for what's the use of a man's having a 'arth of his own if he's got to ask leave of the parish at large every time he wants to sit down by it ?'

'Never mind me, I'm comin' in presently,' said the landlord ; and then directing Matthew's attention to a pair of low folding-doors through which a backyard opened upon the street, he added, 'I want to count the others clearing off by the back way, else some of 'em will be fallin' down with their pipes and settin' fire to the premises. Let him go on a little longer, sir, to give me time to see 'em all pass out. You see 'em how they're rollin' out, as much as to say they don't care for nobody, but they hug the wall, where the

shade is, pretty close for all that. And to-morrow they'll pretend it was all his fault, just as he's now pretendin' it was all theirs.'

'But, as I was goin' to say, guv'nor,' said Spike, going back to the point he had started with, 'people what drinks—well, never you trust 'em in word or deed.'

'I never trust 'em beyond pay-day,' whispered the landlord to Matthew. 'But there's a crowd beginnin' to collect, sir, and I suppose we'd better make a move indoors.'

'Wait a moment,' returned Matthew.

'I'll tell you what people as drink will do,' continued the carpenter, regarding the crowd, and yielding to the desire of making himself heard—which the sight of a listening assembly seems to excite in oratorical breasts: 'they'll take their solemn oath to the truth of the biggest lie ever coined in hell, and they'll take their solemn oath to do what they'll never be able to do, and what they'll never move a inch out of their road to try to do. Press the liquor on 'em, or join in hearty if they're willin' to stand treat, and they'll swear that you're the only person they ever met correspondin' to their idea of what a man ought to be, and that they're ready to go through fire and water for you, as perhaps they haven't never seen afore in their lives; and the next mornin' if you 'appens to meet 'em, and especially if they stood treat and consequently finds themselves short, they'll scowl at you as if you was poison, or pass you by as if they didn't know you.'

'Oh, there baint nawthin' the matter with him, be there?'

exclaimed a young carter, sarcastically. 'He never takes nawthin' stronger nor water, *he* doan't. He baint drunk now, hisself, be he?'

'Let him alone,' observed the young carter's mother. 'What he says is true enough.'

'Yes, let him alone,' repeated another woman, on whose face a bitter experience was stamped in strong characters. 'Let him alone, and you'll hear the truth. Out o' their own lips shall they condemn themselves, as parson says in church.'

'One o' them kind of coves,' continued Spike, 'them, I mean, that can't be merry and wise, and forget the motter: *May the evening's conviviality bear the morning's refection*; and that can't enjoy themselves without gettin' drunk straight off,—why, if one o' them takes it into his head to go in for the water trade—which it's against nature, seeing the human stomach requires something stronger—why, they'll give you the cold shoulder and avoid you, as if you was too wicked for saints like them to speak to.'

'Yes,' commented the sorrowful-faced woman, 'they see plain enough what fools they've been, when the drink's out of them.'

'And, if contrarywise,' resumed the carpenter, 'they're on the spree, why, when they've knocked their own pile of halfpence down, they'll hang on to you, as if it was a pain to 'em to see you go out of their sight; and they'll let you stan' treat to the last copper, even if they know the missis and the young uns are a-waitin' all the time for you to take somethin' 'ome to pay off on the shop book, before

which they can get nothink else into the 'ouse; and, cert'n'y, how can you expect tick to be allowed for ever?'

'Let him go on,' remarked the woman with the sorrow-lined countenance. 'It's his conscience moving him now; in another minute it'll be the drink again.'

That was her way of putting the fact, that drink was intensifying his reflective faculty and his passions alternately.

'And, furthermore than that,' continued Spike, 'when your last coin has mizzled they'll cling on to you as long as you can go on score, and when that's run out, or when things begin to turn nasty, they'll melt away like these coves have done—which, if there's one thing in this life more uncultervated than another, it's interruptin' of the 'armony and a-spoilin' of good fellowship; and, if that ain't a sound maxum of fren'ly feelin', I appeal, for a corroboration of the statement what's just fell from me, to the gen'l'man in the 'at.'

As several of those present had head-coverings which might properly be said to come under the designation 'hat,' Matthew thought that it must be some conspicuous specimen of the article which was thus pointedly referred to; and so, turning round, he was not surprised to see near himself the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle. With the youthful ecclesiastic was standing Mr. Stopp; and not far away from the pair, with a self-congratulatory air of disgust marked on all his features, Mr. Peevers, the teetotaller.

'Is this one of your friends?' inquired Mr. Stopp of Matthew—at the same time indicating Spike—'one of your newly-imported acquaintances?'

'Yes,' answered Matthew, promptly; 'I know him very well indeed.'

Mr. Stopp upon this craned over to examine his wristbands and to reflect.

'Do you think,' asked the young curate in his turn, 'that any good can be done by introducing such a person as that?'

'To that person himself, yes—much,' replied Matthew: 'perhaps even by yourself; indeed, I think him a particularly fit object for the attention of one in your office.'

'My office!' exclaimed the young clergyman, with astonishment. 'My business lies not with such as him!'

'That,' said Matthew, 'is perhaps convenient for all concerned—mine does.'

Then, lifting his voice, he called out,—

'Spike! shut that window, and come here.'

And while the neophyte of symbolism hurried away in company with Mr. Stopp, denouncing to the latter, as they went, the loathsomeness of the sight which Spike had presented, and proclaiming the high necessity of warning the well-conducted from following in the footsteps of so shocking a character, Matthew led off the back-sliding carpenter, with the intention of trying the possibility of making *him* also well-conducted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE next morning, just as Matthew was on the point of rising from the breakfast-table, Richard, to whose filial care the carpenter had been entrusted for the night, entered the room, and whispered in his master's ear,—

'My Bloke's in the kitchen, and he was thinkin' you might happen to have something to say to him.'

Matthew, bearing in mind that it was at his request that Spike had come down from London to see him, was not surprised at this surmise of the carpenter's.

'And how is your father this morning, Richard?' he inquired.

'Rather middlin',' replied Richard, smoothing the closely-cropped hair at the back of his head, and then resting the knuckles of both hands on his hips. 'He's been upset.'

'Last night, you mean?'

'No, sir; this mornin'.'

'But he hasn't been—'

'No, sir, he ain't been at it again yet, but he soon will be if they goes on barkin' at him like this.'

'Like what?'

'Why, what must he want to do this morning but go out and get a clean shave, bein', as he said, not fit for you to see him without it; so I took him down to What's-his-name, the shoemaker's—which he's the only man in the village where you can get it done; and *his* hand isn't over-steady, according to all accounts and general appearances when he sponges off the soap; for he isn't altogether unbeknown at the "White Horse" himself—'

'Well, and—'

'Yes, sir; well, when me and my Bloke was comin' away, and while the drink was still hangin' about him, who should we meet but old Water-rates—What-d'ye-call-him?'

'Mr. Peevers?'

'Yes; he's always coming down here now since She came into the property. Well, it seems he saw somethin' of what passed at the "White Horse" last night; and havin' just had his breakfast, and with a clean white shirt on and his boots fresh blacked, I suppose he felt very good and go-to-meetin'-like; and so he began a-jeerin' and a-sneerin' at my Bloke, as if he'd like to set all the riff-raff of the place at his heels.'

'What was it Mr. Peevers said?'

'He said my Bloke was a public object.'

'And what did your father say to that?'

'He said he'd heard of a good many celebrated characters in his time, but accordin' to what he knew they'd all committed crimes which, as far as he was aware, he hadn't; but if he had done anything bad enough, without knowing it, to make hisself an object of interest to his country, why, the public could go on a-lookin', and

they needn't mind him ; for he had no fear hisself of its havin' a bad effect on his character, seein' that he could bear bein' put in the newspapers, and stared at, and talked about, and bet on, and quarrelled over, without its makin' him proud.'

'And Mr. Peevers—'

'He said, my Bloke ought to be as'amed of hisself, and asked him if he didn't oughter know better.'

'And your father—'

'He made reply and said yes, he oughter, and he did ; but he wasn't goin' to be brow-beat into doing what he oughter by anybody, specially by people as didn't know what was right and what was wrong half as well as he did hisself.

'H'm.'

'And he was goin' on, as I could see, till language, if not violence, would be the end ; so I got him away home into the kitchen, and they've given him some coffee and he's managed to eat a crust.'

'And so, in fact, he has got over his little encounter with Mr. Peevers.'

'He's gettin' sober now, but I ain't sure of him yet,' replied Richard, with a reflective shake of the head, while mending the fire. 'Comin' along he said as how, to show folks what value he set on remarks made without bein' asked for, he'd go on the racket again for twopence, which it's lucky he ain't got so much on him.'

'Well, ask your father to speak to me an instant, Richard.'

Spike, the elder, getting sober, looked a more damaged object than Spike, the elder, getting drunk. The flabby cheeks were white and the under eyelids pendulous and blue ; the eye itself uncertain, and the humid hands trembling ; the corners of the mouth, like the shoulders and the elbows, twitching. The whole aspect was that of one ashamed and in fear, without the strength, mental or physical, to face anybody or anything—of one seeking for darkness to shelter him. He wished it was night, that the shadowy corners might hide him and the view of the lights might cheer him. The raw glare of day to him was horror.

He put up a shaking hand to his forehead in salutation, and, on Matthew's invitation to a seat, took one in the shadiest part of the room.

'Spike,' said Matthew, 'your son mentioned that you were in want of work, and so it was arranged that he should write and tell you that you could be put on here if you liked to come down.'

'I got your message, sir, and a good boy Richard was to speak for me, and a good gen'l'man you are, sir, to think of me.'

'Well, you can begin work across there,' said Matthew, pointing over the space where stood the remains of the old cross, to the small building already mentioned ; we are turning the old barn into a reading-room for the village. As to a dwelling for you, there is a nice cottage just fallen empty at a place called Common Side ; the rent is small, and with a little help from a bricklayer, you can

gradually put it into order against the time when you can get your wife and family down from London.'

'And am I to have a house offered to me as well, sir? You're too good, sir, and I don't deserve it—no, I don't. You know what I've been, sir, but you'll see what I'm goin' to be now. You'll see what I am when I'm sober—you'll see me, sir, like what I used to be afore I took to drink.'

Spike still continued to tremble, but the expression of fear had given way to his usual air of self-assertion.

'And as for a bricklayer helpin' me, sir, why, I don't want no bricklayer, sir! I can handle a trowel at a push almost as well as a bricklayer himself, sir; and there's hardly anything in the building way you won't find me equal to if I'm called on, sir. You've only got to say, "Spike," says you, "there's so-and-so to be done," and it'll be done, sir. Don't you be afraid about nothin', sir; you've only got to come to me, and I'll do it, sir—just you leave it to me, sir.'

The habit of self-commendation, which had been so marked a characteristic of Spike when he was drunk, as it is of nearly all those given up to alcohol, could not be hidden even now that he was sober. This reminded Matthew that the carpenter was keenly sensitive to praise, and he made a mental note of it.

'There's a nice bit of garden-ground attached to the cottage at Common Side, Spike.'

'A nice bit o' garden-ground, sir! Now, just think o' that!—think o' me once again a-diggin' up my own taters and a-cuttin' my own cabbages! and a-gatherin' my own green peas, and a-pluckin' my own pinks and roses and sweet-willums; think o' me a-trimmin' my own currant and gooseberry bushes, and a-thinnin' out my own onion-beds, and perhaps, why not? a-trenchin' out my own sal'ry beds! Think o' me a-pullin' up my own lettuces and a-cuttin' my own mustard and cress for Sunday tea! Why, it seems ridic'lous!'

'And there's a capital pigstye at the back of the garden, Spike, where, with odds and ends from the garden and a little barley-meal, which, if you saved your money, especially taking care of the odd coppers, Spike, you could afford to buy—a couple of nice young porkers might be—'

'Coaxed into turnin' their pretty selves into the rent, not to mention hams and hands and sides enough to serve the table all the year round as well. Why not, sir!'

'Why not, indeed.'

'And me a-goin' home o' summer nights, and after tea goin' out to tend to the pigs, and then, with a pipe in my mouth, a-watchin' 'em grow—eh, sir?'

'Then, there's a nice sheltered corner, where you could knock up a fowl-house, Spike; there's the common for the fowls to scratch about on, and you would only have to see—'

'They laid their eggs on the premises, sir! Oh, you needn't

warn me, sir ; I knows their habits, and I'm up to 'em. It all comes back to me, sir, as if I was a-doin' it only yesterday !'

'And on the common, close to your cottage,' continued the tempter, 'there's a duck-pond, where—'

'I could breed ducks, sir !—and, just as I think of it !—but there, fortune is a-showerin' it all down on me at once !—cabbages, pigs, cocks and hens, duck-ponds and ducks !—but I was going to say—why not add a moke? the work lies wide, you know, sir, in a country place, and a man isn't so much up to his work if he has to walk several miles to it and from it—why not say a donkey as well, sir !'

'Go along, Neddy !' exclaimed Spike suddenly, making believe to shake the reins over the back of something. 'Look at him !—did you ever see such a treasure ! For his coat is so sleek, and his temper so meek, and his ears are so neat, and his voice is so sweet ! Wo-ho-ho, Neddy !—there's no holding him in when his blood's up. I think I can see him a-spinnin' along and a-passin' everything on the road !—why not add a donkey, sir, while we're about it ?'

'Why not?—hoard your spare money—especially the odd coppers, Spike, and you can soon buy one ; and next to the pigstye of your cottage are the remains of an old shed, and with the aid of a few old boards, which will be sold to you cheap—not given to you, mind, out of the carpenter's yard, you can easily turn it into a little stable for him ; and as for feed, why, it is an odd thing if you cannot manage that—'

'With the common over the fence ?'

'And with what you can spare out of your garden.'

'My garden !' repeated Spike, shutting his eyes in order to see the mental picture better. 'What ever 'll the missis say?—and how ever am I to thank you, sir, for all you've done for such an undeservin' cove as me ?'

'There are others to thank more than me, Spike ; and I mention that, because I want you to be on your guard. There is the lady of the place, the ruler, as you may say, of these parts, who knows something of you, and there is another lady who also knows something of you, good Mrs. Parlbly, who is one of the most influential amongst the Nonconformists here, and who is, moreover, going to marry the rector of the parish—a lady whose good word it will be worth your while to keep, don't you see, Spike ?—well, both these ladies believe that you only need the opportunity to succeed in doing well.'

'That's all I do need, sir. You wait and see how well I turn out, now these ladies have took a interest in me, sir :—my humble duty and respects to 'em both, sir, when you see 'em, and thankin' 'em kindly too, sir ; and you needn't be afraid of me, sir : I'll come up to their expectations of me : have no fear of that, sir.'

'I hope you will, Spike, for I ought to tell you that I have in a manner vouched for you myself : I have, in fact, become a sort of surety for your good behaviour.'

'Don't you be afraid, sir : I shall turn out all right if I only have the chance given me. You won't have no need to be ashamed of my acquaintance, sir. You don't know me yet, sir ; I can do anything I like if I try ; and if ever you find Spike, the carpenter, in anything whatsoever he's undertaken unequal to the occasion, just you mention it to him , sir, and—'

Matthew waited for the conclusion.

'Well,' finished Spike, 'he will be very much astonished to hear it said of him.'

## CHAPTER XXIV.

'THAT brings me back to something else I was going to speak about, Spike,' said Matthew, wilyly seizing his occasion. 'Spike, I can't for the life of me understand how a man of your reputed ability and skill can so lower himself, as you often do, in the eyes of other people.'

'Well, sir, it do seem remarkable, don't it now ? I suppose it's all along of my modesty. But I can no more help bein' meek and retirin' than some people can help bein' boastful and blusterin'. A man can't help his own nature, you know, sir.'

'But it is your duty, to your family, to your fellow-creatures, to yourself, Spike, to bring your good qualities forward.'

'But I ain't one of them as have the knack of callin' attention to their qualities, don't you see, sir ?'

'But, Spike, I am bound, for your own sake, to tell you that you *have* the knack, as you call it, of calling attention to your qualities—to one class of them, I mean ; the bad ones. And I say, I can't for the life of me understand a man like you, with your understanding and general powers, acting as you did last night ; throwing open a public-house window, and then, with a staring crowd in front of you—'

'Oh, you're talkin' of last night, sir ? Why, sir, you don't think I was my natural self then, do you ?'

'Certainly I do not, Spike. What surprises me, is that a man of your understanding should so far suffer himself to cease to be his natural self as to run the risk of being—'

'Chaffed and looked down on by his inferiors, eh, sir ?'

'Suppose we put it like that, Spike ?'

'We will put it like that, sir. And I can quite understand your surprise, sir, that I should lower myself so.'

'And before so many people, Spike.'

'Well, sir, when I takes a drop too much, you see, it's in public : there ain't no concealment about it now, is there, sir ? I ain't like some people as takes as much as me, but takes it on the sly, and keeps it dark.'

Matthew winced at this unintended thrust.

'I allow you all the credit due to you in that respect,' he said ;



'but the consolation to be derived by you from that fact is, I am sorry to say, not much, Spike—especially on this particular occasion.'

'Why, it was only once, sir, after all. It was the first time I was ever set eyes on before in this place.'

'Exactly; and the first time you were ever seen here, the first evening you spent at Thatchley, you—you, a man of your capabilities, a man whose powers justify him in offering to set an example to others—you were seen—'

'Drunk, and making what was next door to a disturbance; I know what you was goin' to say, sir.'

'I am not referring to this to cause you useless pain, Spike. But it is better for you that I should dwell on it, in order that you may see how extremely careful you have now to be if you wish to wipe out the effect of last night's affair. I won't smooth it over to you—don't smooth it over to yourself; but put this fact before your eyes, and in the clearest characters you are able mentally to picture: that by this unfortunate occurrence of last night, you went a long way towards undoing—to what extent you don't know, and I myself can't yet tell you—the good that has been so carefully planned for you.'

'It was only once, sir—'

'It was only once, Spike; but bear in mind that now, instead of having only friends whose object is to aid you, you have enemies acting against them, enemies whose object will be to strike at you, not only at you, but at me, through you; and that you have put a cudgel into their hands to beat you with. Bear that in mind, Spike, and you will the better succeed in keeping to the right path. I cannot do a better thing for you than to impress upon you a sense of the serious danger into which you have put your new chances of success.'

'It was only once, sir—'

'It was only once, that is, it has so far been only once; but don't shut your eyes to the fact, Spike, that it will be remembered not only by those who bear ill-will towards you, but even by those who have no feeling either for or against you. A man is remembered, Spike, in private life, at least, by his faults: his good acts are known to the few, his bad ones to the many. A good deed in private life usually benefits only an individual, and therefore attracts no general attention; a fault interests all, as giving ground on all sides either for self-commendation or for self-excuse.'

'I know what you want to say, sir,' said Spike, kindly supplying what he thought were the needful words. 'The man who has never been charged with the same fault says, "They can't say that of me;" and him as has, says, "Well, I ain't the only one"—I know what you want to say, sir.'

'Those who have an object in urging it against you—and I tell you, Spike, there are such persons—persons not actuated so much against you as against me—those persons will seize the first opportunity of doing so; and those who have no present ill-feeling towards

you will bear the occurrence in mind against the time when they have.'

'It was only once, sir; and if from now I keep straight and don't give 'em another opportunity for talking, they can't make much out of once, sir.'

'Let that be the understanding, Spike, and remember this, that the longer and longer you go without giving them another opportunity, the weaker and weaker will become their excuse for seeking to rake up against you a charge of the past. Any attempt on their part to do so, in the face of your persisting in the teeth of them to do right, will recoil upon their own heads in the shape of an unanswerable charge of wanton and unsatisfied malignity.'

'Don't be afraid of me, sir. I'll be equal to 'em this time. I have made a good resolution this time, and I mean to stick to it.'

'Remember that it is no easy task, Spike—that it will require all your efforts.'

'And now, sir,' said Spike, getting up to go, but with the fumbling air of one who wanted to say something without knowing how to begin; 'and now, sir, there's a little favour I want to ask of you, sir—'

'Ah, Spike, Spike, take care; I think I know what you are going to ask.'

'Well, you see, sir, it's rather awkward to find one's-self in a strange place without a penny; and if so be, sir, you wouldn't mind advancin' me a trifle on my first pay—'

'But it is not like a strange place to you, Spike, as far as the people in it are concerned. Your son is here, I am here, and lodgings are provided for you where you will find everything you want supplied to you until your first pay-day—'

'But still, sir, a man don't like to find hisself the only one amongst his mates without a penny on him—'

'To be able to take a glass when offered, and return it when accepted, eh, Spike? Take care, Spike: this is the dangerous moment. You are cheered with the prospect before you, and with all that your good resolution promises. It is at just this cheerful moment that you have to be on your guard. The future smiles upon you, and you feel so strong in your good resolution, that it seems exactly the time to accept and to offer a glass. No, no, Spike; if your good resolution is worth anything at all, let it commence to take effect from this instant. Don't endanger it by beginning at the outset to trifle with it.'

'Well, sir, I won't act contrary to good advice.'

'Why, you remember the story, Spike, about the Man and Resolution—you've heard it and told it a hundred times?'

'The Man and—'

## CHAPTER XXV.

'WHY, the man who struck a bargain with Resolution to the effect that he was to pass so many inns by the way without stopping to call for anything to drink.'

'Oh, now I recollect!—why, of course, I have told and heard it a hundred times!—but let's see, sir, how did it go on? The man, he—'

'Well, the man, sure enough, he passed the first inn without ever so much as looking at it, and trudged along, mightily pleased with what Resolution had enabled him to do; and when he came to the second he was still more pleased, so much so, that he clapped Resolution on the back and cried out, "Well done, Resolution, you deserve to be treated for that, and treat you I will!" So in they went, and at the first glass Resolution was overcome, so that he couldn't help the Man any more, and the Man got as drunk as ever he had got in his life.'

'Oh, I call it to mind now, sir,' said Spike; 'but I never heard it told like that before; leastways, not exactly; but I daresay you ain't far out.'

'Never trust too much to Resolution, Spike; and on no account parley with him: he's a very uncertain rascal if you give him the least liberty. Stick to him, but be cold and stern with him; and then you may trust him to help you at many a difficult and dangerous turn. But he is far too ready to make himself pleasant; and the worst of it is, the fellow has generally a surprisingly weak head, so that, if you treat him to a glass, the chances are that no sooner has he swallowed it but he'll sneak away and leave you in the lurch to shift for yourself.'

'I know him, sir!—I've joined company with him many and many a time; but he is such a patient, deserving cove, that it seems hard not to offer him a glass now and then, just to make it easier for him, and not to put the strain on too tight, especially if a mate happens to turn up.'

'It's precisely at one of these moments—when a mate happens to turn up—that you must put on your sternest air of Resolution, Spike.'

'But you're caught unawares, sir, very often; and that cove, Resolution, you're a-talking about, sir, ain't no good at all for giving you a hint of what's coming.'

'That's why I told you not to trust him too much. Never go out without taking along with you a certain smart dog who answers everywhere to the name of Watch: an animal all eyes and ears, and who can sniff danger even when it's far out of hearing or seeing. Keep him by your side, Spike, and he will—'

'Wake up Mr. Resolution whenever necessary, eh, sir?'

'With great promptness, Spike: only, you must take care to keep him by your side, for he is very active and very fond of work, and if he finds, as it sometimes happens, that you haven't much for

him to do for yourself, he is apt to run off, busying himself about other people's affairs.'

'Yes, sir ; and a great mistake it is, now, ain't it ?—to go giving yourself such a lot of trouble about other folk's little failings afore you're quite sure your own don't want all the attention you've got to give 'em, and with none to spare.'

'It is, Spike. And now, just go and ask the housekeeper to give you another cup of coffee, and try and swallow another crust. Then you can come with me over to the building, and I will show you what to begin with. After that you can come back to Richard, who will take you to the lodgings he has found for you, and then you can come back here to dinner, this being your first day at Thatchley ; and Richard will entertain you to a jug of good beer.'

'You are very kind, sir—'

'But no drinking out of doors, Spike.'

'No, no, sir.'

'But there is one other thing,' added Matthew, not forgetting the theory which he had on two occasions expounded at such length ; 'your evenings, when the work of the day is over, what will you do with them ? They ought not to be left to chance, if you wish to avoid a continual source of danger.'

'No, sir.'

'You should plan some means of occupying your hours of rest, without having to drift away into the taproom or the skittle ground again—eh, Spike ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very soon you will have to occupy yourself with getting your cottage ready for your wife and little ones ; and then there will be your garden and pigstye and fowl-house, and many other things requiring your leisure time at Common Side ; but in the mean time—'

'Yes, sir.'

'We must get the reading-room ready as soon as possible ; and what I was going to particularly mention to you, Spike, is that there is Richard, with his harness-room ; he has made himself very cosy there this winter, and he can now read the newspaper almost as well as the parish clerk ; and if you would like to hear the news of the day, and talk over old times with him, he would be very proud, I am sure, to entertain his father over the fire he keeps going there for keeping the harness and other things dry ; and, on the whole, I think you would be likely to enjoy your pint of beer and your pipe there with Richard as much as at the public-house—eh ! Spike ?'

'And more too, sir ; besides saving up a tidy pile of ha'pence as well, which I must do it, if the missis and the young uns are to be got down from London in the spring.'

'And you have to think of a little furniture, too, Spike.'

'Oh, as for that, sir, we've got pretty near enough for our little shake-down, I think. The missis was always very particular about keeping the little we had, and such as it is, together. She was

always very strong-headed in holding on to the sticks and the crockery—seein', as she said, that while we had them we'd always got the means of makin' a home anywhere.'

'She showed a woman's foresight there—eh! Spike?'

'Yes, sir; and I will say this of her, if it hadn't been for her we might have been without a home over our heads long ago.'

'But, in any case, besides remitting something home every week, the expense of getting your family and your furniture down here will be no trifle to you, Spike—so you see the need of being very careful.'

'Yes, sir, it will upset a pretty heap of ha'pence, that will; but I think I can feel my way to it, sir. What I ain't so easy about is—but I don't like to impose on kindness.'

'Tell me what your trouble is, Spike.'

'Well, sir, you see, times has been bad, and I've had to part, one by one, with nearly the whole of my little set of surgical instruments—chest I have none, and as for the frail I brought with me, it was more for appearance's sake I put it over my shoulder, for what's in it isn't enough to make a candle-box with; and to have a trade between your fingers is all very well, sir, but you want—'

'The tools with it,' said Matthew. 'But you can be easy on that score, Spike. Richard has, I believe, anticipated some such difficulty.'

'Bless that boy!' exclaimed Spike. 'I never knew such a head in my life. I always thought he took after me; but he's got the missis' heart about him, too.'

'Yes; and bear in mind, Spike, that I wish you to ask for my interference in your affairs as little as possible. The first person to rely upon, if you wish to succeed, is yourself; and if you want counsel and help besides, then rely on your wife and Richard. They are your real friends, Spike.'

'I know that, sir; and if I had only acted accordingly!'

'Well now, Spike, you are going to face the future in a better spirit, are you not? You feel a little more cheerful than you did?'

'Cheerful, sir! I feel like as if it was Saturday night, and we was all a-goin' to the play—clean washed, and with a tripe supper awaitin' for us when we got home! Or as if it was Derby day, and we was all a-sittin' in the green-grocer's van, with a basket fresh packed, and a big stone bottle all handy, and a fine, bright day afore us! Sir, there are moments in our lives when, as the song-book says, our hearts brim over with joy, and our voices with gladness do ring, when our troubles forget to annoy, and our throats are a—what is it?—and our throats are a bustin' to sing!—moments, sir, when we don't mind being shoved, and having our toes trod on; when we looks upon everybody as of the same family party; and when we feels inclined to pass the pewter round to all the world, coupled with a message to 'em, to drink 'earty.'

'Ah! Spike, Spike! take care. You're getting into a perilous mood—'

'Well, sir, I do feel uncommonly like wantin' to treat Resolution ; but don't you be afraid o' me, sir. It is rather hard to resist an old habit, but I know it won't do to give in to it ; and, now that you have thrown a little sunlight on my path, so that I can see Hope a-beckonin' of me to make haste and come along, I feel as if there *was* some good in tryin'.'

'That is how I wanted you to feel, Spike.'

'But when a man loses all hope in himself, as I had, and feels that he's got too far out of the right track ever to find it again, as I felt ; and then, when this cove and that cove is always a-comin' up and takin' such particular pains to tell you what a bad man you are, and where you're sure to go to (as though *they* knew for certain, and there wasn't no mistake whatsoever about it), callin' you a object and every other bad name they can think of, and in general makin' observations which, if there's any meanin' in 'em at all, mean the best thing you can do is to go and hang yourself and have done with it ; why, then, if a man don't happen to be in the humour to act on the friendly hint, what does he do ? Why, he goes and smokes his 'bacca round the corner, where, as long as he keeps hisself *to* hisself, he'll be let alone ; and where, as long as he has got the coppers, he can make himself believe, for an hour or so, he's very nearly 'appy.'

'I think, Spike, his thoughts should turn a little at the same time on the possibility of making an hour or so's happiness for his wife and children as well.'

'Yes, sir ; I plead guilty. I've thought more of my own misery than theirs. I've felt low and down-hearted, and miserable and hopeless, and the remedy at the "corner" was always easy ; it was always there a-waitin' for me, and always ready to welcome me, and I went to it, and never thought—yes, guv'nor, I did think, but I tried not to think, and there's everything there laid out to stop you thinkin' about them at home, as are a-lookin' for you—them as I ought to have tended and been a prop to ; but—but, guv'nor, you—you'll—'

'Yes, yes, Spike. Never mind now—calm yourself—come, come.'

'You'll see what a husband and a father I'll be, now I've got the chance, sir !'

'Yes, Spike, all is changed now. We are now going to see the real Spike.'

'Yes ; and I wonder what the missis 'll say !' exclaimed the carpenter, recovering from his brief emotion with the buoyancy of spirit happily natural to him. 'I wonder what *she*'ll say !'

'She will say you have turned over a new leaf, Spike.'

'Several new leaves, sir ; a whole handful at a time.'

'But you mustn't hope to skip the hard parts, Spike.'

## CHAPTER XXVI.

'AND now, Priscilla and Mary Anne, you can take these to the school,' said Kate, pointing to two bundles of newly cut-out, but still unsewn, articles of clothing in calico and flannel. 'Give my compliments to Miss Mangnall, and say I shall come in to-morrow afternoon, and then we will commence the sewing.'

Priscilla and Mary Anne were two of the bigger girls of the village school, and they had been drafted in their due turn for that afternoon to assist Mrs. Parlby and Kate, and thus at the same time get a lesson in the art of cutting-out.

As they walked away they could not, however much they desired not to appear proud, conceal in their air that they were persons of consequence. For two hours they had been in personal contact with the two great ladies—not *fine* but *gentle* ladies—of the place—in that intimate personal contact which seems to be involved when congenial souls plan and toil, with pins and scissors, over the same table, and at the same piece of work; and it is probable that they felt as much pleasure at this moment as they would have done if they had just been presented in public with a prize book called, for instance, 'Prudence Prim, or the Little Girl who never did anything Wrong,' and had had platitudes addressed not so much to them as over their heads, to their patrons and patronesses in the front seats.

At the moment when Kate had been putting a piece of cake and an apple into the pocket of each of these future mothers of the village, Mrs. Parlby whispered to Matthew, who had taken a chair near her,—

'Is Mr. Jack come back yet?'

In asking this she directed his thoughts with her eyes towards Pattie.

'Not yet,' replied Matthew, in a tone intelligible only to his interrogator; 'but I shall see him to-night.'

Mrs. Parlby answered with a smile of approbation.

'Pattie, dear,' she said aloud, 'are you not sitting with your weak shoulder too near that side window? The wind is in that quarter, too.'

'No, auntie; I don't think so,' replied Pattie. 'Besides, it is well to discipline the body to suffering. It is a dragging down of the soul to be for ever on the watch against a little physical discomfort.'

Notwithstanding, she looked exceedingly comfortable, with her handsome throat and shoulders nestled warmly in the folds of a graceful shawl, knitted and trellised in wool. Her pretty feet, too, cased in slippers almost ostentatiously neat, were basking luxuriously on a footstool, pushed as close up to the fire as the fender would admit of; and her plump, white fingers, the satin skin of which was further adorned with sundry trifles from the jeweller,

seemed to handle with enjoyment the soft material of the something she was working at—a something ecclesiastic.

'Pattie,' said Kate, seating herself for a few minutes' rest in an easy-chair, 'when you can spare half-an-hour from that symbolical cover for the curate's hassock, we might make a beginning with the overhauling and marking of auntie's new household linen.'

'Because,' she continued, getting up to put her arms round the gentle Mrs. Parlbys neck, 'the dear old auntie is going to change her name; and she won't trust a stupid bachelor man to attend to such an important matter as the household linen, because bachelor men are so very, very stupid in providing for anything that relates to their domestic comfort; which they are so very, very fond of, if somebody else will take the trouble to provide it for them.'

'I have begun working a Gothic design for the back of a *prie-dieu* for auntie,' said Pattie; 'and of course it is a great delight to me to do anything for the use of dear auntie, when at the same time it is a work which reminds me of one's great work and end in life; but I think, Kate, dear, the marking of household linen may very well be relegated to the housekeeper, or some other servant of the household.'

It will be observed that, since poor Pattie's association with the other Sisters of Thatchley in the adoration of curates, she had taken to the use of very fine language.

'I think, Pattie,' retorted Kate, putting on her severest air, 'that assisting the domestics—the ever busy domestics—in one's own home, in useful and very necessary work, is quite as honourable as relieving the sexton's wife of work which is not at all too much for her, and which, I am sure, she can do very much better than you can; the sexton's wife is stronger than you are, and she is much more practised in cleaning and sweeping than you are; therefore, where is the necessity of your offering to clean the brass-work and sweep down the steps of the chancel for her? There is plenty of work in life better suited to your abilities and your previous training for you to do, without going out of your way to put the sexton's wife out of hers. No, Pattie, let us do the work that comes most naturally to our hands.'

Pattie shook her graceful head in solemn reproof, while holding up one of her little feet the better to warm it, and at the same time the better to view the pretty arch of the instep.

'If you persist in this sort of thing,' pursued Kate, 'you ought next, in all consistency, to go down into the vaults and offer to relieve the man who tends the fire up to a late hour of a Saturday night, in order to get the church warm for Sunday.'

'That would be unnecessary and objectless, Kate,' murmured Pattie with a pout.

'Would it be more unnecessary and objectless, as you call it,' rejoined Kate, 'to relieve the stoke-hole-man, as he is called, than to relieve the sexton's wife? I happen to know that she has a tolerably easy lot in life; she and her husband are doing very well,



and they have nothing to burden them besides themselves, the man having a large garden, from which he sends a great quantity of vegetables to market, and his wife making a good deal by her needle; while the unfortunate stoke-hole-man, whom the sexton is well enough off to pay to relieve himself of a Saturday night in the vaults, has a rheumatic mother to partially keep, and a wife who is nearly always too ill to attend to her very large family of children. Of the two, I really think, Pattie, the furnace-man is in much greater need of your superfluous energy than the sexton's wife.'

'Now you are ridiculing me, Kate.'

'Ridiculing you, my darling!' exclaimed Kate, throwing her arms this time round Pattie's neck, and laughing softly in her throat, and smiling with the gracious smile belonging to her fine face. 'Not ridiculing you, darling, but only trying to induce you to be your own dear old natural self, and to act in your own dear old natural way.'

Pattie only moved her head in deprecation of such an appeal.

'But there is one thing you will come into the storeroom to see done, I know,' said Kate, with artful determination to turn Pattie's thoughts on some detail of the household, however small. 'Priscilla, not Prissy, who is just gone away, but Mr. Bernock's housekeeper, you know, is coming this afternoon to bottle off the raspberry vinegar she made for us last summer—don't you remember?—and you must come and see how bright and clear it is—as bright and clear as crystal!—and how mellowed it is in taste and odour even in six or seven months;—for Priscilla is famous for her vinegars and her jellies and preserves; and we must write out some labels so that the bottles are not mistaken for others. You will do that with me, won't you, dear?'

'What do they do with raspberry vinegar?' languidly inquired Pattie, not to commit herself incautiously to a too secular occupation.

'Why, it is very useful, you know,' answered wily Kate, 'at the bedside of the sick.'

'O-o-h!' exclaimed Pattie, with awakened interest.

'It allays the burning thirst of fever,' continued Kate; 'and in milder cases of illness is always refreshing to the mouth. You will lend a hand with me in helping Priscilla in such a useful provision, won't you, dear;—and we have also to write the names for her on the parchment covers of several dozen pots of jelly and preserves;—which are being continually required for the invalids of the place. It is such a comfort to the poor to get these things!—and without persons, like ourselves, with a little time and a little money to spare, they would never get them, poor people!'

'Yes, I can promise to aid in work of that kind,' said Pattie, with much gravity. 'Such occupation clearly comes within the sphere of the good work of the sisterhood.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

'AND so, Mr. Bernock,' at length exclaimed Kate, pleased with the success of her first effort to divert Pattie's mind, even if only for a little while, from a too constant consideration of brazen ornaments and symbolical hassock-covers, 'you see some hope that your experiment with this terrible Spike may succeed.'

'I do,' replied Matthew, who, while an attentive auditor in the foregoing scene, had been making a polite pretence of looking at a picture-book. 'Spike himself really seems to be trying his best to make it successful.'

'I am so delighted,' said gentle Mrs. Parlby—soon to be gentle Mrs. Maybright. 'I am sure you must have acted with wonderful judiciousness, Mr. Bernock, to have established such influence, and therefore controul, over one so much given to—intemperance.'

'With the wisdom of the serpent and the gentleness of the dove, I should think,' remarked Kate, who, ever the first to resent any hostility manifested towards her man of business in his absence, was always ready, it seemed, in his presence, and especially in the face of eulogy paid to him by another person, to turn the play of ridicule against him. 'It would be quite interesting—moving, one would say—to hear how so marvellous a reformation has been effected.'

'It is not difficult to explain how the change—it would be premature at present to call it a reformation—has been induced,' said Matthew. 'Instead of launching into reproach and derision, and so exciting anger; the essence of which passion, we are told, is a desire to injure; which desire in such a case would naturally seek for satisfaction in a display of contempt for the advice offered, and thus inevitably lead to an obstinate persistence in the line of conduct, ridiculed—'

'Dear, oh dear!' exclaimed Kate, with a laugh. 'This surely, comes under the head of psychology, or some of the other metaphysical ologies!'

'Kate, Kate!' murmured Mrs. Parlby.

'Instead of pursuing a reproachful and derisive course,' resumed Matthew, 'I suggested to Spike the substitution, for a pleasure that is pernicious and leads to all manner of bad, of one that is wholesome and leads to all manner of good. Of course, I know a dangerous pleasure which is always ready to one's hand cannot be withheld from without pain; but it is just as well, in pointing out to a man the necessity of encountering that pain, to call his very particular attention at the same time to the compensatory pleasure that, sooner or later, it is certain to bring after it.'

'Ology, ology, ology!' exclaimed Kate.

'Kate, Kate!' again murmured Mrs. Parlby, about whose lips, notwithstanding, something like a smile was hovering; for it did appear even to her that this was a most extraordinarily considerate

method of dealing with the reformation of a drunken carpenter. 'I am sure Mr. Bernock deserves much praise for the great attention he has given to Spike's case, and for the great pains he has taken to carry out our wishes.'

'No doubt, no doubt,' acquiesced Kate. 'In any case, you think, Mr. Bernock, we shall be able to effect this dreadful Spike's reform without waiting for these proposed Local Option measures to be made law?'

'I hope so,' replied Matthew. 'We can, at least, try.'

'Do you think these proposed Parliamentary measures advisable, Mr. Bernock?' inquired Mrs. Parlby.

'That,' he said with a laugh, 'is a question which the nation has to decide.'

'But the nation is made up of individuals,' observed Kate; 'what is your individual opinion?'

'H'm,' began Matthew.

'We are expecting some other visitors presently,' said Kate. 'I just mention it because I don't want them to come in and interrupt us before we have finished with this interesting topic.'

'And I have a good deal of work to complete before the day is over,' added Matthew, readily taking this very obvious hint; 'and so, perhaps, we may postpone the conversation to a moment of greater leisure.'

'No, no,' quickly returned Kate, 'I want my question answered before you go.'

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

'I WAS going to say,' said Matthew somewhat uneasily, but proceeding with rapidity, 'that one of the most constantly recurring and most difficult problems that confront a statesman is, how much of the conduct of mankind may be left to the individual's own discretion, and how much requires to be ensured by the coercion of legislative law.'

'Yes,' agreed Kate.

'The higher the state of civilisation, as it is called, to which a country has attained, the more are its inhabitants individually willing to submit to the coercion of laws intended for the general benefit, and at the same time the less willing are they to suffer public interference with what is commonly regarded as private action.'

Mrs. Parlby and Kate nodded in acquiescence.

'Now, such things have been known in this country, not to go back to nations of greater antiquity, as Sumptuary Laws—for controuling the individual's expenditure on the clothing and adornment of the person. Such laws would not be tolerated, I suppose, now-a-days?'

'I should think not, indeed!' exclaimed Kate. 'You must be taking us back to the Dark Ages, surely?'

'Not quite. Again, I suppose, a law intended to regulate what, and when, and where we should eat would be still less tolerated?'

'Such a law would be monstrous,' promptly remarked Kate, 'except on the supposition that we were gluttonous savages without self-restraint over our appetites.'

'Exactly,' said Matthew, 'and it is on some such assumption as this, I suppose, that the advocates of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors demand laws regulating what, and where, and when we shall drink.'

'But that is quite a different matter!' cried Kate.

'What difference do you point to?'

'Why, of course,' replied Kate, 'everybody knows that the liquor trade must be regulated by law; a licence must be obtained before a public-house can be established; and the hours when it may be kept open, and when it must be kept shut, are strictly limited by Act of Parliament.'

'And some persons,' added Matthew, 'desire that the granting of licences should not be left to the judgment of the necessarily small number of magistrates in a given district, but that every application for a licence should be determined on by the votes of all the respectable inhabitants of the place; others go further still, and say that a certain majority of the voters of a place ought to have the power by passing a public resolution to forbid the existence in their locality of anything whatsoever in the nature of a tavern. But still, what we should ask ourselves is, what is the difference between—'

'And, when you consider,' interposed Mrs. Parlyby, 'the terrible evils of drink; the domestic misery which we see on all sides of us; the privation, almost the starvation, of men and women, and, most of all, of poor little innocent children; the physical degeneration of a large part of our race in consequence of this privation in early life; the deeds of open violence—the frightful crimes even—which are directly caused by drink; the spiritual degradation—'

'Exactly,' interrupted Matthew in his turn, 'you have now pointed to the difference I was inquiring about. Excess in expenditure on the clothing and adornment of the person and excess in eating do not involve what we may call frequent and instant danger either to the person indulging in such excess or to the community at large. Excess in drinking does. Hence the excuse put forth for legislation in regard to the drink trade, that is for taking the matter of liquid refreshment out of the limits of private action, and bringing it into the domain of public coercion.'

'Very well,' said Kate, who had always got her conclusion to an argument ready, because she had always formed it before the argument began; 'and now that brings us back to the question, do you think, as an individual, that these additional and stricter measures of coercion which are proposed for regulating the consumption of intoxicating drinks right, or expedient, or necessary, or—or not?'

‘It is natural in the individual to resent coercion in matters which he thinks private to himself.’

‘But there must be coercion if we want order; in civilised society we are bound to submit to it for the common good.’

‘Yes, coercion into restraining ourselves from working injury or annoyance to others. We willingly agree for the sake of protecting one from another, to submit to the law which forbids a man getting drunk in public and injuring or annoying passers-by in the streets; but we shrug up our shoulders at the idea of a law which is to take out of our own discretion what, and when, and how much we may drink in private.’

‘But these new measures that are talked of,’ observed Mrs. Parlbby, ‘would interfere with no one’s private liberty to drink what, and when, and how much he pleased within his own doors.’

‘Ostensibly not in all cases,’ replied Matthew, ‘and in the case of those of comparatively easy means absolutely not; but the people who live from hand to mouth, that is, the majority of persons, would be condemned, unless they had recourse to an unbanned district, to what would be tantamount to total abstinence from alcoholic drinks—all alike, drunk and sober, thrifty and unthrifty, weak-nerved and strong-nerved, delicate and robust; willy-nilly—whether they liked it or not—whether it suited them or not.’

‘But those who really required spirits,’ returned Mrs. Parlbby, ‘could always get them from the grocer, in small quantities suited to the state of their purse, without being compelled to lay out money for large quantities.’

‘It is not spirits that the hard-working man or woman would feel the want of,’ answered Matthew: ‘it is their beer they would miss; and as for encouraging the grocers to sell beer on draught, why, you might as well retain the present beer-shops.’

‘Would it not be possible,’ asked Mrs. Parlbby, ‘to permit the beer-houses to continue, allowing them to *sell* beer, but restraining them from allowing it—’

‘To be drunk on the premises, except in the case of travellers,’ completed Matthew; ‘but we know, under the present Sunday rule, enough of sham travellers; the oldest inhabitant would become for the moment a “traveller,” if not in his own parish, in the nearest one to him; and so you would be where you were before. *Let any one go and see for himself, as I have seen for myself, how absolutely inoperative Sunday Closing Bills are in the United States of America.*’

‘Well,’ said Kate, who had been waiting for an opportunity of delivering her final conclusion, ‘I see nothing for it, but for the temperate to forego their liberty for the sake of the intemperate. It is no good professing to be good unless we are prepared to prove our sincerity by making some sacrifice for the benefit of others.’

‘But,’ observed Matthew, ‘there are some—I will even say, in these days of exhausting civilisation, vast numbers—who suffer severely, much more indeed than they would care to confess, from

physical debility, from a want—especially amongst the inhabitants of crowded towns—from a want of nerve power—

‘Which,’ interposed Kate, ‘is very frequently, if not most often, induced by previous over-indulgence in alcohol.’

‘But,’ asked Matthew, ‘would you ask the temperate Frenchman—’

‘Ah!’ cried Kate, ‘that is another thing! The temperate Frenchman! that’s just it. The French are all temperate, and don’t require legislative measures to keep them sober.’

‘Permit me to venture on a slight correction,’ began Matthew.

‘Oh, of course, the French are a scrupulously temperate people!’ exclaimed Mrs. Parlbey. ‘I never saw a drunken Frenchman in the streets, and I have heard hundreds of English people say the same.’

‘No doubt,’ agreed Matthew, ‘hundreds of English holiday visitors on the wing, who, as a rule, rarely have time to stray out of the great thoroughfares; but what tale would you hear from those English people who not only visit France, but who stay in it, and who therefore have opportunities of looking into its daily life more carefully?’

‘But I passed many years in France,’ said Kate, ‘not on the wing, but in an educational establishment—’

‘Incorporated with a convent, I suppose?’ added Matthew.

‘Yes,’ innocently replied Kate.

‘And therefore,’ continued Matthew, with a laugh, in which Kate herself presently joined, ‘hardly the place for closely observing the drinking habits of the lower classes. Now, in the long period of years that I have passed in France, I have given a very keen eye to, amongst other haunts, the wine-shops and the cafés-brasseries. A vast amount of drinking goes on in the latter; but the beverage consumed in them being for the most part mild, frothy “bock” beer, cases of palpable intoxication are, I admit, rare, except in cafés-brasseries of a certain kind, such as are found, for instance, in certain quarters of Paris, and of such a town, say, as Havre or as Marseilles; but in the wine-shops, the refreshment places of the artisan and the labourer, and, above all, of the dram-drinker, I am bound to say that I have seen a very great deal of downright, unmistakable drunkenness.’

‘I am surprised,’ observed Mrs. Parlbey.

‘If it was not so,’ added Matthew, ‘why should one see hanging up in every cabaret a list of such stringent Parliamentary regulations for the suppression of “alcôolisme”? But to come back to my point, would you ask the temperate French peasant to forego the stimulating refreshment of his rough but nourishing red wine, for the purpose of enabling the Legislative Chambers to prevent the drunkard getting at it?’

‘It would be very creditable, on the sober peasant’s part, if he acceded to such a request,’ replied Kate evasively.

‘No doubt of that,’ returned Matthew; ‘but ought he to be asked such a thing? Generally, in fine, ought persons to whom it is easy to be temperate, or who habitually exercise controul over

themselves, to be required to forego what, taken in moderation, is a wholesome refreshment, and in very many cases a necessary refreshment, for the sake of those who won't restrain themselves from a dangerous practice, unless the law compel them to do so ?'

'Yes,' answered Kate, 'if there is no other means of curing the evil.'

'Such a means would not *cure* the evil,' said Matthew ; 'it would merely scotch it, stuff it up in holes.'

'Very well, then,' quickly remarked Kate, 'you think that the passing of this proposed Local Option measure ought to be resisted?'

'Yes, I do ; and I will tell you why,' replied Matthew, calling to mind the conversation with Checkers of the 'White Horse,' which has been recounted in the twentieth chapter of this third part. 'But first of all keep this in view, that notwithstanding the great parade the Local Option party makes of an apparently fair desire, *only* to take from the magistrates and to give to the general inhabitants of a locality the power of deciding the question whether a particular licence to sell intoxicating drink should be granted or not, their *real* intention is, when once they have a majority of votes, to shut up every liquor-selling place in that locality. Now, there are many questions which ought not to be left to public vote to decide once and for ever, to the exclusion of all future voting on the subject ; and this *real* proposal of the Local Option party, not to speak of their ostentatiously *ostensible* proposal, is one which I believe directly becomes one of those questions. *A Local Option vote which one year suppressed the sale of liquors in a locality, would exclude all future voting on that question in that locality. The voters of to-day would be able not only to speak for themselves, but to close the mouths of future voters ; and the aggregate amount of drinking in the country would not be diminished by such a measure, for reasons I can give.*

'But would such a vote in a locality,' inquired Kate, '*necessarily* suppress future voting.'

'Practically so,' replied Matthew ; 'because no prudent man who knew that the liquor trade once had been suppressed, and many of its members ruined, in a locality by a turn of the public vote, would ever risk his money in that place. A man wants some reasonable security for his investments.'

'But,' said Mrs. Parlbay, 'a publican is, even under the present system, liable to have a renewal of his licence refused by the magistrates. The licence is, I believe, only granted for one year, and even magistrates may have reason to change their mind from year to year.'

'Yes, but the publicans,' returned Matthew, again recalling the conversation with Checkers of the 'White Horse,'—'feel perfectly well that the judgment of a few propertied magistrates is less open, less pliant to,—in fact, less unprepared for a gust of public enthusiasm, than the public vote. Men who, by the fortune of position, know and are jealous of their own influence in a district, are obvi-

ously less dominated by a band of active agitators than the public in general, who are easily moved, or who from indifference keep quiet and do nothing. And, as I say, a man, even a publican, wants some reasonable prospect of his investment being safe before he makes it.'

'But, even under the present system,' said Kate, 'to insist on auntie's remark, a publican is only licensed from year to year. A twelvemonth's licence does not give him vested interests any more than letting a farm on yearly tenancy creates for the yearly tenant vested interests.'

'But the man who enters on a yearly tenancy of a farm,' replied Matthew, 'usually does so on the well-grounded hope that, by fulfilling the conditions of his engagement he will, sooner or later, get his interests assured for a number of years by a lease; and even where he remains a yearly tenant, he feels secure against sudden disturbance, from the understanding of moral obligation which, by experience, he knows to exist, at least in this country, between a landlord and a good tenant. The publican who has invested his money in a house licensed only for a year, feels an analogous understanding to exist between himself and the magistrates so long as he fulfils the conditions of his licence; but all such feeling of security would vanish if he thought his interests were each year liable to sudden extinction by a turn of the public vote. And so, I say, that practically what the Local Optionists intend is, by virtually banning investors in the liquor trade from a certain locality for ever, to render the voice of the public on that question in that locality useless,—that is, practically silent for ever; which intention I regard as unfair, not only to the *publicans*, but, what is much more, to the *public*.'

'You are clearly no believer in Local Option,' remarked Kate.

'And the supporters of Local Option should not lose sight of these two facts,' added Matthew, 'that one of the most certain and most immediate consequences of banning the liquor trade from one district would be to increase it in the nearest one unbanned; and that if Local Option came into force in a district where hard drinkers were in the majority, the number of licensed houses in that locality would be multiplied without stint.'

'And in fact on the whole,' rejoined Kate with sarcasm in her voice, 'you think the efforts of the teetotallers are altogether bad in their effect?'

'On the contrary,' returned Matthew. 'In the case of every person won over to temperance by the teetotallers, the latter have conferred a benefit on the community. Such an organisation as the "Blue Ribbon Army" is doing good by catching in its filmy nets the rising generation. Of course only a percentage of the children so caught will abide, as they grow up, by their pledges, but in any case there will, no doubt, be a percentage gained to temperance, if not to out-and-out teetotalism, by enthusiastic efforts of this sort. Teetotallers can do more for temperance by similar efforts than by



yielding to statistic delights and spreading such statements, for instance, as these : (1) that because it is computed we have spent in the United Kingdom, in fifty years ending with the year 1879, over seven thousand millions of pounds in drink, therefore all that sum has been absolutely lost to the country ; and (2) that because the sum so alleged to be lost, if invested at five per cent. each decade as it grew, would have produced over six thousand millions of pounds interest, therefore the loss of the whole of this last-mentioned sum must be attributed to our drinking habits.

'As to statement No. 1, it is at once obvious to an ordinary mind that, allowing for what has been sent out to foreign countries in payment for the indulgence of the rich in brandy, liqueurs and wines, a very large part of the seven billions has been kept in the country by our own brewers and distillers ; and as to the statement No. 2, why, it is made on the assumption that, if the seven billions had not been spent in drink, the whole of it would inevitably have been invested in, so to say, *imperishable* things, such therefore as might have yielded, so to say, *permanent* interest on the expenditure ; whereas it is highly probable that even if the money had not been spent in drink, the greater part of it would have been spent in additional meat, firing and clothing—things certainly more necessary to a family than beer, but certainly just as perishable as malt and all its extracts. I wouldn't contradict any one who said that it would have been better for the morality of the country if a considerable portion of the seven billions had been spent in encouraging other than the drink trades ; but I do say of the statements that the whole of that sum has been lost to this country, and that the whole of the calculated six billions of interest has been lost to this country by the drinkers—that both are untrue ; and I say that those advocates of temperance who promulgate delusive statistics do injury to their cause, by destroying confidence in it.'

'Well, in any event,' tried to sum up Kate, 'you don't believe in Local Option?'

'I don't agree,' replied Matthew, 'with any legislation which, in the first place, would without compensation destroy investments made under the sanction of legislation, and, in the next, enable voters of the present to practically silence voters of the future.'

'I say, in fine, that drunkenness is opposed to the interests of licensed victuallers, and that Local Option is opposed to the interests of the people.'

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HERE the door opened and the servant announced,—

'Mr. Vasper and Mr. Stopp.'

'Oh, I am so glad you are come,' exclaimed Kate, greeting them with what Matthew thought was extraordinary cordiality. 'We are having a very interesting discussion ; and I shall be so glad to hear your opinion.'

Matthew instantly rose to go, with an expression of countenance which if there were any milk in the house would probably have turned it sour.

'No, no, don't go,' said Kate, lowering her voice.

'The question is,' she continued, raising her voice again, 'whether the working man should not be coerced into abstaining from intoxicating drinks altogether. Mr. Bernock says, or inclines to the opinion, that he ought not.'

'Course he ought,' said Vasper, with ostentatious rapidity, as though to convey his belief that the subject needed not an instant's thought.

'Nobody who knows anything about the working-man—which is only another name for a confounded nuisance—would venture on an opinion to the contrary—eh, Stopp?'

'I am—er—distinctly of your opinion,' slowly enunciated Mr. Stopp. 'It is perfectly well known that—er—if the working-man had unrestrained access to—er—beverages of an alcoholic nature, that—er—he would imbibe—in point of fact, absorb, such quantities as would—er—indubitably lead to—er—'

'In point of fact,' interposed Vasper, 'to his being locked up, which is the only thing he is fit for. But, talking of this subject reminds me that I am consumed with thirst myself for the moment. May I ring the bell for some water, Mrs. Parlbey?'

'Don't get up,' said the ever ready Kate; 'I will see that your wants are supplied.'

And in two or three minutes water and other refreshments were brought into the room.

'Let me help you,' said Stopp, obsequiously.

'Just half a glass of water,' said Vasper.

'Permit me to remind you of your medical adviser's caution,' murmured Stopp, deferentially. 'A little brandy to correct the—'

'Yes, just a dash; but I'll help myself,' returned Vasper; and reaching hold of the brandy bottle he helped himself to a 'dash,' equal at least to a third of a good-sized tumbler glass.

'One seems to want a corrective of that sort in this confounded climate,' he said, fetching his breath and smacking his lips after the potion; 'especially when you have got a raw February mist like this down your throat.'

'But to come back,' said Kate, 'to our working-man, and his public-house, and the best means of stamping out drunkenness.'

'Shut up every pot-house in the land from one end of it to the other,' decreed Vasper; 'and if after that a working-man is found drunk, duck him in the nearest horse-pond without more ado.'

'Oh fie!' exclaimed Mrs. Parlbey, 'you would never sanction such a cruel proceeding?'

'No,' laughed Kate, 'that would, indeed, be a little too Draconian for the poor working-man!'

'That's how I should like to see the poor working-man dealt with,' continued Vasper. 'Empower every policeman to act in that

summary manner on his own authority, and you would save us Justices of the Peace a world of trouble—two-thirds, at least, of our work on the bench.’

‘But come, Mr. Stopp,’ broke off Kate, suddenly rising and going towards the door, ‘to business, to business! I thought we could work better on the big table in the dining-room, so I have had everything put there.’

Stopp rose to open the door for her with as much alacrity as was consistent with the ostentatiously deliberate style of movement he cultivated; while Vasper looked at them both with the smile of evil exultation which he had worn that well-remembered September’s afternoon, when, after his rebuff from Kate, he had so softly lit a cigar and so slowly sauntered away, beneath the unsuspected gaze of Matthew, over the sun-lit grass and under the shadowy trees.

‘And, Mr. Vasper,’ added Kate, ‘you will find the new French ballad on the stand in the corner. Study the words and see how it goes, and I will come back presently and play the accompaniment for you.’

‘Perhaps in the mean time Miss Pattie will help me to get hold of the air?’ suggested Vasper, slyly.

‘You know that I never fritter my time over secular compositions now,’ observed Pattie in grave rebuke.

It seemed to Matthew, while watching Kate and Stopp leave the room, that the painful feelings at work in his own heart must have been divined by Mrs. Parlbay; for that gentle lady remarked in tones almost of apology,—

‘Mr. Stopp was kind enough to promise Kate his assistance in mounting some of the best of her water-colour sketches; so you see she held him to his promise.’

Vasper looked up from the French ballad at Matthew with a smile of derision.

In giving her hand to Matthew, as the latter was going, Mrs. Parlbay said in a low voice,—

‘And Mr. Jack Gurgyle returns to-night?’

‘Yes,’ he replied.

‘You will bring him here to-morrow evening, won’t you? We are going to have some extra music.’

Walking homewards, Matthew felt on Jack’s account both pleased and amused at the eagerness which the dear lady could not now help showing in forwarding the proposed match; but on his own account his heart was full of bitterness.

It was natural that he should ask himself why Kate had not called for his assistance in mounting her sketches. She saw him almost every day of her life, and he was at least as competent as Stopp in that branch of architectural business; and yet she must seek that man’s aid, and she could not even avail herself of his help in a place where other people were sitting, but must make a pretext to get him into a separate room all to herself.

Could it be possible that there was any foundation for this con-

tinual coupling of Stopp's name with hers? Stopp was so much older than her—not so much older than Vasper was, but still a good twenty years at the least. However, young women sometimes overlooked a difference of that sort; but her position, in point of fortune, was so much above Stopp's now: well, even that was a difference young women had been known to overlook when their hearts were set on a man.

Could it then, indeed, be that a mind and body so beautiful as hers were to become the prey of a nature so cold and thin-blooded and insignificant as Stopp's?

If this union was really to take place, it would have been some consolation to him to have had it proved that he was mistaken in Stopp's character; but the slightest reflection established only too irrefutably, on the contrary, that he had not been so mistaken.

What tormented him most was the ever-rising thought, that Kate was deceived as to the nature of the man to whom it was said she was about to entrust herself, and that she would discover her mistake only when it was too late.

---

### CHAPTER XXX.

HOWEVER full of bitterness Matthew felt his own heart to be, he lost no time in communicating to Jack's the joy naturally arising from what Mrs. Parlbly had allowed to be inferred would be her attitude in regard to that gentleman's suit for the hand of Pattie. Thus, no sooner was the rising young architect returned to Thatchley from the successful initiation of his previously mentioned projects at Carborough, than a note was handed to him urgently requiring him to dine with Matthew at six o'clock that very evening.

'And so!' exclaimed Mr. Jack Gurgoyne, already aglow with the generous liquids he had taken before even the cloth had been removed, '*I*—really *I*—the humble practiser of the divine art, perpetuated in the imperishable monuments transmitted to a degenerate age by the glorious monks of old—'

'Yes,' put in Matthew, more by way of stopping the threatened torrent of eloquence than of signifying his agreement with the matter of it.

'*I*—after all—I am to be my gentle lady's cure—her sweet medicine—'

'Well, as far as I gathered,' interposed Matthew, 'rather the bitter antidote, Jack.'

'Mat!'

'Or rather, perhaps, it was the homœopathic doctrine that was thought of, don't you remember?—like cures like.'

'How do you mean?'

'Why, your complaint will cure Pattie's; you are both suffering from a kind of mediæval madness—a monomania about symbols—her attack takes the direction of symbolism in ceremony, yours of

symbolism in architecture. The two together will kill each other—like to like, you know.'

'Don't talk to me about homœopathic globules,' said Jack, helping himself to a bumper and passing the bottle. 'I like big doses of everything that is meant for one's good, myself.'

'Yes, but there is the danger of making them too big, Jack.'

'I recognise the paternal warning,' returned Jack. 'And, certainly, I must confess that if Pattie's complaint was this,' he added, pointing to the bottle, 'I should make a marvellous good cure for her on the principle you were talking of—about like curing like.'

'Don't, Jack, don't!' exclaimed Matthew, evidently shocked.

'Don't indulge in such an unpleasant hypothesis!'

'Why, you old stupid, I was only joking.'

'You remember the old saying,' said Matthew, "'There's many a truth spoken in jest.'"

'Now, here,' cried Jack, 'is a man who one moment ridicules a love of symbolism as madness, and the very next himself confesses to superstition!'

'But never mind about curing others, Jack, at least for the present; you have now to give all your attention to curing yourself. You wouldn't think it right to entangle a woman's life with your own as long as there was imminent danger of your lapsing into a confirmed drunkard, would you?'

'That's rather an unadorned way of putting it, Mat. A confirmed drunkard, indeed! Well, I don't think I am in any very immediate peril of *that*.'

'I am bound to put it to you in the plainest words I can find; because I am bound by my understanding with Mrs. Parlbay to leave you under no doubt as to her determination in the matter; she will do nothing to promote, on the contrary, she will do everything to oppose, Pattie's marriage with any one giving cause for a fear of his yielding to the temptation of drink.'

'But you know, Mat, that so far I have given no reasonable grounds for so extreme a fear.'

'Well, Jack, for some few weeks you certainly did seem to be practising temperance with great success; but there has been a great falling off of late; now, hasn't there? Would you believe it, that I have rarely seen you after midday for some weeks past without your being under the influence of liquor?'

'Well, you might say the same of anybody who takes only a glass of beer with his lunch; for even a single glass of beer ought to have some influence, unless it's very small beer indeed.'

'Yes, yes; but I was talking of a *visible* influence, Jack.'

'But you don't mean to say that I have been looking drunk every time you have seen me of late after the middle part of the day!'

'Not drunk; but when you see a man with his face very much redder than usual, his eyes clouded and half-closed, his hat stuck on his head at an unusual angle, and himself talking much faster

and much more excitedly than is his wont, you are—well, you are not slow to connect all this with the faint but quite perceptible odour of wine or spirits given off with his breath; and if this happens, say, as early as two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and he happens to be a professional man, and you happen to be one of his clients, your conclusions, especially if you are a client of the strait-laced sort, will not be favourable to his further employment.'

'You astonish me, Mat. I have had occasions of late to take a glass or two, perhaps, more than was good for me, but I certainly thought that I had managed not to show it in my looks.'

'That is the mistake we all make, Jack. As long as we feel that we can stand and walk straight, and think and talk coherently, we think that our looks are unchanged; but if we could only glance with another's eyes into a looking-glass, we should see something that would make us ashamed of ourselves.'

'You know things have been taking a lucky turn with me of late, and you musn't be hard on me, Mat. I have waited long, very long, for these chances to offer themselves—'

He had forgotten for the time—but only for the time—that it was Matthew who had descried, gone in pursuit of, laid hold on, and thrown into his way, these chances; he had forgotten that, but, in justice to him, it should be added—only for a time.

'And I have been in such unusually joyous spirits in consequence,' he continued, 'that I have been only too ready to crack a bottle whenever there seemed an occasion for it; and I have been meeting so many people, and I have clinched so much important business with them that it seemed like an insult—down-right ingratitude, sheer hard-heartedness—in fact, an utter want of that feeling of the common humanity existing between us all that ought to soften, to temper, and to smooth all our dealings with each other—I felt it would have been all that to leave them without drawing a cork.'

'Oh, Jack, Jack! And when things look black, and you find yourself obliged, in the solitude of your own presence, to face them, what do you, then, do out of regard for this feeling of common humanity?'

'Why, then, I do just the same, Mat, by way of reminding myself, in moments of dark misanthropy, that such a thing as humanity exists, or has been heard of as existing.'

'And so, whatever the mood you are in, whatever course affairs take, a reason for tapping a bottle is always turning up.'

'Well, it is tremendously difficult to do without it, Mat: if carrying out a resolution was one plunge—a shock, a shiver, and a shake, and then vigour and cheerfulness instantly following—I could manage it; but it is such an everlasting thing, never finished, and with no hope of being finished; beginning to worry you when you wake, and never leaving off worrying you until you drop off asleep at night; dogging your steps, and rushing at you full in the face just as you have got it out of your thoughts, and you

are beginning to feel happy for a few brief instants: that's what makes a resolution such a confoundedly difficult thing; it won't leave you alone.'

'I heard—in fact, I myself was giving quite a different description of it the other day,' observed Matthew, recalling his conversation with Spike the carpenter. 'But, in any case, the temporary ease of mind you get from alcohol is heavily paid for in the penalties of the waking up—don't you find?'

'I do. Every morning while dressing I am reminded that it won't do to go on playing these pranks with my constitution any longer; and the shattered condition I continue in the whole forenoon gives unpleasant emphasis to the reminder. But I recover myself after I have managed to eat a tolerable lunch, and then my apprehensions vanish again, and I am not more backward in falling in with a proposition to 'take a "pick-me-up,"' as they call it, than I was the day before.'

'Yes, you begin with the small quantity which, no doubt, does serve to "pick one up," as they say, but then you repeat it, on the spot or soon after, so many times that, instead of being refreshed, you are simply—I don't say for a moment, drunk—but fuddled.'

'That's how it happens, Mat; and it goes on like that day after day, till one day seems to be nothing but a counterpart of the previous one.'

---

## CHAPTER XXXI.

'BUT don't lose sight of this, Jack: you are come into a considerable amount of business which will involve a very great deal of brain-work: now, the brain—I know it for certain—won't stand being severely taxed with work and at the same time over-stimulated with alcohol; the body can stand severe labour combined with excessive stimulation for a very long time; but, I warn you, the brain cannot.'

'I know it can't, Mat: I have had very serious warnings from Nature herself in my own person.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Matthew, 'I was wondering whether they had come yet in your case.'

'Not the least doubt about it. An uncomfortable fulness of the head comes on almost as soon as I have begun any mental application: then succeeds a dull aching pain at the top of the brain apparently—a feeling which reminds you of the aching strain of an overtaxed muscle, with its accompanying idea that if the effort is persisted in something will give way.'

'The pain you speak of is the aching of the blood-vessels of the brain; which have become relaxed and weakened in consequence of the large and continuous flow of blood to the head, which hard and sustained thought produces, being unduly accelerated by the over-stimulation of an immoderate quantity of alcohol. Keep this

up—severe mental application combined with excessive alcoholic stimulation—and the result will be brain-fever, paralysis, or some incurable affection of the brain: some cerebral disease causing intolerable agony, and ending in idiocy and death. What other warning have you had, Jack?

‘I can’t keep my eyes fixed of a morning, before I have been able to make a substantial meal, for five minutes at a stretch on anything that has to be read or to be very carefully regarded without a painful effort, and that effort seems as if it would twist them round and extinguish them; and if I persist in the effort, letters or lines, whichever it is I am looking at, become confounded in an unintelligible jumble.’

‘Go on, Jack: let us have a full and complete confession while you are about it.’

‘And I have a sort of something, that isn’t altogether pleasant, in or about the heart; and I wake up sometimes of a night with that organ beating, as they say, like a sledge-hammer; and it isn’t always caused, as it sometimes is, by the heat and weight of too many clothes on the bed; indeed, I often experience it in the daytime when I am sitting not over-clothed at my work.’

‘You can’t wonder at that when you turn on the alcoholic steam at haphazard pressure without any regard to the strength of the machine it has to act upon: we venture, I know, and we may venture, on greater liberties with the human organs than we should ever dare to take with artificial mechanisms; but still, it is downright recklessness, pure folly, to turn a pressure on to any one of our delicate but wonderfully elastic bodily apparatuses without ever estimating—surmising—what am I saying?—without ever giving so much even as a moment’s thought to the superhumanly constructed organ’s power of resistance.’

‘Quite right,’ agreed Jack; ‘one cannot wonder, as you say.’

‘But go on, Jack: keep nothing back; then we shall know exactly what we have to do with.’

‘Well, then, I am rarely able now-a-days to controul my hand before I have appetite enough to fortify myself with a good lunch. But help yourself, and pass the bottle, or I shall be falling back into the same state, and without strength to continue my moving story. Well, would you believe it, Mat? I wouldn’t answer for the exact movements of my hand in the morning—not even to the extent of writing my own name legibly.’

‘Is that all, Jack?’

‘Not by any means: my arms and legs do certain customary things spontaneously—what shall I say?—acting without orders, as it were, without any exercise of the will.’

‘Without any *apparent* exercise of the will,’ corrected Matthew. ‘But that occurs to all of us every day of our lives.’

‘Indeed!’

‘Why, of course: take the most obvious case—walking: if we are thinking much more about something else than about our steps,



as we generally are, a regular repetition of the movements of the body take place without apparently—*apparently* without—any exercise of the will. If the walk is an habitual one, then even the turns round certain corners, or in certain directions, the going up and down certain steps, or the getting over certain stiles, or the opening of certain gates,—are all acts which are frequently made without any *apparent* exercise of the will.’

‘Yes, but I find myself beginning to do certain things when I have had no intention of doing them.’

‘It is mere association of ideas,’ replied Mat, who, however anxious he was that his friend should take note of real symptoms of danger, did not wish him to fall into morbid exaggeration of trifles. ‘A certain act is so closely associated with something else, that on the sight, the sound, or the movement of that something else, the will so instantly causes the act to take place that there seems to have been no time for thought, and thus we jump to the conclusion that the act has by habit become a spontaneous one.’

‘Yes, but you, no doubt, are still talking of things done in due order, and when there is need for their being done: the things I am speaking of I do quite out of order, and when there is no need whatever for them.’

‘Well, then, you say that this so-called spontaneous action is becoming with you phenomenally irregular?—and in the day time, do you say?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why, Jack,’ exclaimed Matthew, ‘you will become a midday somnambulist!’

‘Quite so,’ acquiesced the highly-amused Jack; ‘but when a somnambulist does irregular things he is asleep—in a sort of open-eyed sleep—I have been told.’

‘And when you do these irregular things in the day time,’ rejoined Matthew, ‘your condition must also be that of open-eyed sleep, lasting, however, only for a few seconds. If this is another result of too frequent recourse to alcoholic restoration, behold one more strong reason for reforming your ways.’

‘There is another thing,’ resumed Jack; ‘of a morning—say before twelve or one o’clock.’

‘Exactly; after fasting from solid food all the night, as well, probably, as all the previous evening, and quite as probably, all the subsequent morning, and before the nourishing elements of the lunch have been faced and swallowed, and—’

‘Before, in fact,’ interposed Jack, ‘one feels to have stomach for anything at all; just so; well at that time I very often have a sensation of being about to suddenly lose the power of movement and feeling in this arm.’

‘That is a very serious warning, Jack; it is nothing less than a threat of paralysis.’

‘The deuce it is!’

‘You have only to go on stimulating this unnatural out-pour from

the brain-centres—this frightful waste of nerve power, for that is the effect which the excessive use of alcohol has on the brain, you have only to persist in that abuse of a useful stimulant, and you can reckon almost certainly on being sooner or later stricken with paralysis, or, perhaps, with epileptic fits, which will reduce you to a shaking, jerking, and sometimes dangerous lunatic; then there will be nothing before you but the mad-house.'

'That is not a nice prospect, Mat.'

'No, it is a dreadful one,' said Matthew, with intentional directness of phrase.

'Formerly,' said Jack, 'the only effect on me of getting drunk was an acute headache; but under these more serious warnings what am I to do, Mat?'

'You must call on your manhood, Jack, and cease to yield to a weakness, which everybody must admit is ruinous to body and soul, not to speak of worldly fortune, and which a very large number of people, who think they go a long way towards curing a fault by applying hard names to it, call nothing less than *disgusting*.'

'Do you call it so, Mat?'

'I do in my own mind.'

'Have you cured yourself of it, Mat?'

'I don't say cured; you can't cure such an infernally resurrectional evil. All you can do is to say you have mastered it for the time, and that you see a fair hope of keeping your foot on it for the future.'

'How?'

'By not running the risk of a sudden stumble into excess which is incurred in punishing the mind and body with total abstinence from alcohol, if alcohol in some form is good for them; and by never going to the point where it begins to be bad for them.'

'The first half of the method,' observed Jack, 'is much easier to act on than the second half; it is just the fixing of that point which is the difficulty; it slips on ahead with every glass you take, so that there always appears a little further to go before you need to stop.'

'I don't leave the fixing of the point to the hazard of the hour,' returned Matthew, 'or my method would be simply worthless. I fix it once and for all; it remains the same for one day as for another, and admits of no shifting.'

'It is a very simple method—this one which you have discovered,' said Jack.

'Which I follow, not which I have discovered,' corrected Matthew. 'It is simply the practice of the more moderate of temperance advocates, as they are called, reduced to a formula, and comes to this: take alcohol, if alcohol is necessary, to the extent that your system requires, but don't leave the adjustment of this extent to the chance of the hour; adjust it yourself once and for all, and always keep it in mind; then you cannot be hurried by surprise into excess; you can no longer plead to yourself the

excuse of not having paid attention to how frequently the bottle had gone round or the glasses had been renewed.

'Well, your suggestion, then,' said Jack, 'is nothing more than this: the practice of individual self-controul. And so you can offer nothing more original or more elaborate than that, Mat?'

'All the lecturing in the world,' replied Matthew, 'must bring it back to that.'

'And we must admit,' added Jack, 'that your recommendation is very inoffensive.'

'Not so formidable as an Act of Parliament, and easier to carry out perhaps,' supplemented Matthew.

'And now, Mat, as you say you have to get through a great deal of pressing work this evening, I had better leave you, especially as I am booked this evening for the Beeches. You know the old man is the landlord of my new offices in Carborough; he owns a whole street there, and was mayor before he retired.'

'And so has great influence in Carborough still, and can be of great service to you, Jack, eh? But take care; keep yourself right for the great evening to-morrow at the Cottage.'

'Be sure of that, Mat.'

'But I heard you speak in high praise of the capital cellar they keep up at the Beeches,' added Matthew; 'don't let the hospitable owner press that fine old port of his on you too freely.'

'No, no, Mat; this is to be the rule now: ascertain the right quantity, and don't go beyond it. You see how well I know my lesson.'

---

## CHAPTER XXXII.

THE next morning Matthew received a message from Kate directing him to be at the Hall at a certain hour of the afternoon, for the purpose of consulting with Mr. Jack Gurgoyle, to whom she had sent a similar instruction.

Matthew needed no information as to what was required of him at this consultation; he knew that Kate had pronounced the summit of the central tower to be very ugly—to resemble, in fact, a bundle of faggots, and that it was expected of him and Mr. Jack to project between them some improvement on the design of Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp. He knew also that it would be vain to reiterate to her the observation he had already made, to the effect that Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp would resent such consultation and project being entered on without their consent, as contrary to the practice of the architectural profession, according to which one architect should not be called in to advise on the work of another without the latter's assent; consequently he determined that the best thing to do for all concerned would be to decide with Jack on a few suggestions, and then offer these verbally to Kate, who could, at her pleasure, communicate them to Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp.

without necessarily mentioning the fact that the proposed modifications were not of her own imagining.

But what he did not know was this : that Kate had made no secret to Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp either of her intention not to limit herself to their counsel, or of the source whence she proposed obtaining additional ideas, and that consequently his plans for sparing the feelings of those eminent practitioners were of no avail.

In order to avoid the possible need of calling for momentary aid—as in taking a measurement or adjusting a plank—from any one employed on works which were under the ultimate supervision of Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp, Matthew took the precaution of requesting Spike and his son, Richard, to be in readiness at the spot and time mentioned.

On reaching the ground he saw Richard, with his hands in his pockets, looking, it would seem, but without success, for something mentally satisfying on the ground, and occasionally, with the same object and with the same result, aloft to the summit of the tower.

'He's up there, sir, with my Bloke,' said Richard to Matthew, giving a jerk of the head upwards, and spitting, according to his custom.

'Who is up there on the tower with your father?'

'Him!'

'Mr. Jack Gurgoyle?'

Richard nodded.

'You should have gone up with him, Richard. It is a beautiful sight you get from there.'

'He was a beautiful sight, sir, *he* was, if *that's* what I was a-looking for!'

'Who?'

'Him.'

'Mr. Gurgoyle.'

Richard again nodded ; this time with emphasis.

'Is he ill?'

'I shouldn't wonder, sir. The woman where he lodges told me he didn't get home from the Beeches last night until three in the morning ; and when he got up there was orders waitin' for him to come here, so he's been trying to clear his head with brandy and soda ever since.'

'And your father allowed him to go up to the top of the tower!'

'Why, sir, before my Bloke could say a word or catch hold of him, he flashed up them ladders like a cat ; and it isn't hanging on that's his trouble : it's standin' up without anything to hang on to what he can't do ; and my Bloke—which he keeps on keepin' straight, he do, and not touched a drop too much since he said he wouldn't—he was up after him like a shot ; so t'otherun's all right, and better where he is, if he can be got to stop, for there's nothin' to drink up there.'

'Look here, Richard,' said Matthew, who had been rapidly thinking what was best to be done, 'run round to the stables and ask Jones himself—don't say anything to any one of the grooms—

to bring round the little brougham himself—mind, as quietly and quickly as possible. Tell him to do this for me.'

And while Richard hurried away, Matthew swiftly mounted the ladders to the top of the tower, noting, with a shudder, for the safety of his friend, that the topmost ladder only reached a couple of rounds above the final stage of planks, and that a landing on this latter could only be effected by the aid of an adjacent scaffold-pole rising a little higher,—a defect thought nothing of by a man accustomed to it, but formidable to the unaccustomed, and perilous to the drunkard.

It was a relief to see that Jack was not standing on the outer scaffolding, but on a temporary platform formed for the conveniences of construction within the unfinished masonry; so that, as long as he remained there, he was safe, but if he moved back to the outer boards, then it needed but one stagger, one stumble over a coil of rope or an iron lever, and he would fall plumb down ninety feet to the ground.

For the moment, however, he was in no peril, being in close conversation with the leader of the little gang who were at work on the windy stage, and at the same time carefully watched by Spike, the carpenter.

Matthew scanned the face of the latter keenly, to read at a glance whether he might be relied on at that height, with not a rail nor a rope to meet a lurch in the wrong direction. Always cheery of countenance, Spike now showed a bright intelligence in the eye, together with a fresh ruddiness of the skin, which gave Matthew welcome evidence that the carpenter's promised essay at sobriety had so far been a successful one.

'Hullo, Mat!' stammered Jack, with huskiness. 'Take care yer don't tumble o'bord!—wan'ser steady head up here, wi' strong gale a blow'n'. Hol'ti' orrer me, then ye'll be all-ri'!'

'What's the meaning of this, Jack?' asked Matthew, drawing his friend a little aside. 'What have you been doing with yourself?'

'Been tryin' your remmery for druckerness, Mat;—been tryin' t' fine out how musher cud stan'—'zack quantary 'thout gerrin' druck. I an' th' ole man upper the Beeshes tried it las' night. He seddercud stan' mor'n I; I sedder couldn't. Donna whish beat.'

'But what have you been doing with yourself since you got out of bed this morning, Jack?'

'Been trying to gerridova bad headache, Mat. Brought on, no dow, by too mush applercayshunerth' brain. Been tryin' sod'nd branny all the mornin'. No good. Strornary effeck; allther branny goes to my head, allther soda tm'rlegs: aggravatin' sensation: splen'id clearness o' the head coun'eracted by uncertain'y o' th' limbs. Can't unerstan' it.'

'Be careful, Jack: don't go there—the outside planks are not safe. Keep where you are.'

'All ri', but I wanner showyer somethin',' said Jack, and turning to the stonemason again, he asked, 'what chursh didyer say that was?'

'That's Braxton spire, sir. You can see it plain here; but when you're on the ground, the wood on the rise there—what they call Braxton Rise—hides it.'

It was a single thin spire, tapering up gracefully from a low tower.

'Look, Mat. Mos' remarkable construction! Wemus go an' skesh that. You often see two spires risin' from twin towers on the west front, but there you get a double spire springin' from a single tower and growing out of one common base! reg'lar bifur-bifurcation! Never saw susher thingamer life!'

Matthew motioned the stonemason aside, at the same time making a sign to Spike to keep close to Jack's elbow, and then, while his friend's attention was attracted by the carpenter, whispered to the mason,—

'Is there a way down inside?'

'No, sir; there's no stairs fixed above the first floor yet.'

'And the ladder outside is the only means of getting down?'

'Unless you could lower him on that, sir.'

He pointed to a small portable platform which, suspended by strong chains and pulleys, was used to hoist the heavy blocks of stone with which the tower was being constructed.

'Tell them to hold hard at the winch until you say lower,' said Matthew.

And while the stonemason called to his mates below, Matthew again approached his friend.

'Jack,' he said, 'I want you to look at something down below; but it appears the ladders are not exactly safe; the lift seems the best way of getting down.'

'Oh yes, you wouldn't catch *me* goin' down them ladders,' put in Spike, with ready grasp of the situation; 'they're more perpendic'lar than the side of a house, and they overlap each other half way down, and the top end don't come above the scaffold high enough for a fly to lay hold of. Why,' he continued, giving a wink to the mason, 'it's a plain invitation to commit self-suicide, besides runnin' the risk of fallin' on the top of somebody at the bottom as wasn't expectin' of you so soon.'

Then with the aid of the mason he pulled the suspended platform on to the planks and seated himself under the corner chains; and made gentle preparations to receive Jack, who allowed himself to be assisted to his aerial lodgment by the anxious Matthew.

'Now then, sir, if you don't mind, and will excuse the liberty, I'll lay tight hold of you, and then I sha'n't be frightened,' said the artful Spike, 'for I am that nervous up a height,' he added, 'that when I go up the Monument of London to take a view, and see how trade's a-lookin'—or up a church steeple to see how the crops are a-gettin' on, I always shuts my eyes for fear of turnin' dizzy.'

'Don't be afraid, Spike,' muttered Jack. 'You've on'y gotter hol' ti' onner me.'

'That's what I'm a-doin' of, sir,' replied Spike, winking this

time at Matthew; 'and that's what I'll keep on a-doin' of, sir, if I may make so bold.'

And then Matthew, having looked down through the hole in the scaffolding to see that the man below had got steady hold of the guide rope, and aided by the mason, carefully slid the platform off. It swayed gently to and fro over the abyss.

'Are you all right, Jack?'

'Why, it's as easy as a rocking chair!' cried Jack.

'Stuffed with a feather-bed,' added Spike. 'It's like going down a coalpit in a balloon.'

And the signal being given the pair began to descend, Matthew following by the way of the ladders.

The suspended freight, steadied by the guide rope, pursued its downward journey with gentle regularity. Jack, however, associating his pendulous position with that of the hardy sailor clinging to the wind-rocked mast at sea, thought it meet for the occasion to shout forth the most nautical couplets of a very nautical song. The sound of this, happily merged in the din of trowels, hammers, and stone-saws, attracted the attention of fewer workmen than might have been feared.

But as Matthew was nearing the ground, he heard behind him the sound of light laughter. Descending two staves of the ladder at a time, he lit on the ground in an instant, and turning round saw, just come out from an adjacent door-opening, and gazing up at the descending pair—

Kate, Mrs. Parlby, Pattie, Parson Maybright, the Reverend Gregory Gurgyle, the smiling Vasper, the grinning Peevers, and the simpering Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp.

---

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

'CAPITAL, capital!' exclaimed Vasper, gently clapping his hands. 'Quite an unexpected treat. Very artful of you, Miss Hunston, not to say a word!—but a very enjoyable surprise!—who would have dreamt of this being included in the afternoon's programme! Daring performance on the tight-rope—a chain taking the place of a rope for this occasion only—with a nautical song, by a celebrated architect, supported (for fear of accidents) by an habitual drunkard transformed on the spot into a confirmed teetotaller! Bravo! bravo!'

By this time Spike and his vociferous charge had touched the ground, Jack's vivacious frame being securely entwined by the protecting arms of the carpenter.

'Any one would thay; simp'ered Chamfer, whose speech always gave way under the enunciation of a joke, 'The Gweat Twin Bwethwen Casthor and Pollukth come back to earth?'

Such a twitching of Mr. Chamfer's nose and mouth hereupon ensued, that Vasper asked him if he wasn't well.

'Why,' cried Mr. Peevers, scrutinising the now silent Jack, as he

was helped on to his legs by Spike, 'he's drunk!—drunk as David's sow!' he added, without giving any historical reference to the phenomenon alluded to.

'A case for a policeman, I—er—imagine,' observed Mr. Stopp, with an apparently careful study of Jack's boots, but at the same time, with a very wary eye to the means of retreat offered by a proximate block of stone.

'Don't let him come too near,' quavered Mr. Chamfer, retiring behind his partner's coat-tails. 'He may have weapons concealed on him, or he might go mad all of a sudden!'

'Why, he is ill,' cried Pattie, rushing forward. 'Have you no hearts! Look at his poor, pale face! and now he is swooning. Oh! won't some one run for a doctor? He's dying! I'm sure he's dying! Poor fellow!'

'Hold his head up, Pattie,' said Mrs. Parlbey, 'while I run for some cold water.'

And the gentle lady ran for guidance to a hod-boy, whose mouth yawned, it would seem, for nothing but the reception of lime-dust floating in the neighbourhood.

'Send to the stables for a carriage,' whispered Kate to Matthew, with an unobserved touch on the arm that thrilled him.

It was the flash of an instant. Her dark eyes melted.

'There is one coming,' he replied. 'I took the liberty of ordering out the small brougham.'

And the vehicle, with Richard guiding the coachman, now drew up.

Mr. Maybright lent Matthew a ready hand in helping the unconscious Jack to his feet.

'Put your cousin's hat on for him, Gurgoyne,' said the parson, nodding to the head-covering lying at the young ecclesiastic's feet.

The Reverend Gregory Gurgoyne looking upon the article—of a vulgar, secular, round, hard-felt sort—with half-closed eyes, his head uplifted, and the delicate outlines of his finely-shaped nose quivering, put his protesting hands behind him. With a glance of anger at her youthful instructor in symbolism, Pattie picked up the hat and carefully put it on its owner's head.

Matthew, having seated himself by his friend's side, was about to lean out to tell the coachman where to go, when Mr. Maybright interrupted him, by whispering,—

'Let us take him home with me to the rectory; we can keep him there until he recovers himself, more unobserved than at his lodgings.'

And the amiable clergyman closing the door, jumped up on to the box, and seated himself with the coachman.

As the carriage passed out of sight, Mr. Peevers, looking at Spike, said solemnly,—

'Now, Spike, don't you tell no lies; that man's drunk!'

'All right, Mr. Peevers, sir,' replied the carpenter; 'if it makes you comfortable to think so, sir, I don't want to go makin' contrary remarks, and interruptin' of innocent enjoyment, sir.'



'That man's drunk, Spike, I tell you!' reiterated Mr. Peevers, who was determined not to have such a case slurred over and lost to memory.

'All right, sir. I don't want to say nothing that you don't wish to hear; but anybody is welcome to know that I haven't seen him put nothing into his mouth *this* blessed day,' returned the artful Spike, who thought it unnecessary to mention the fact that he had only been in Jack's company for about twenty minutes on this occasion; 'and if he was indulgin' last night, and you was a-lookin' at him—which you seem to know more about it than I do—why, it was a pity—wasn't it, sir?—that you didn't offer him a trac' and a few of them pleasant remarks you was so liberal in treatin' me to the other morning! and then he might have left off in time, if that's what's the matter with him—which it's you as 'ints it, and not me, for nothing has passed his lips since I've been in his company!'

'Oh yes! *You're* a nice person, you are!' exclaimed Mr. Peevers with bitterness, for he somewhat resented a case so bad as Spike suddenly putting up for the honour of being a total abstainer. 'You will be going on the spree again yourself before the week is out, you see if you don't.'

'I am very much obliged to you, sir, for takin' such a cheerful view of my prospects,' returned Spike; 'and they would look still more hopefuller if you was to offer me the ha'pence to do it with.'

'Oh! Spike, Spike!' exclaimed Mrs. Parlbly, 'I am sure you would not be induced to do anything of the kind. You don't mean to let any act of your own interrupt you in getting the cottage and garden at Common Side ready for your wife and children.'

'I hope not, my lady, and many thanks to you, my lady, for *your* view of the prospect,' said Spike, taking off his cap; 'but seein' as Mr. Peevers was so very anxious to behold me in the same state as he *will* have it this poor gen'l'm'n was in, I was just 'a-wonderin' if he would show himself as anxious to stan' the treat out of his own pocket—which it's quite true there *are* some gen'l'm'n as are so uncommon unselfish and open-handed with their advice and their remarks in general that they can never be brought to think of their own selves and their families until some one begins to talk about where the money is to come from.'

'A bad man! a bad man!' soliloquised Mr. Peevers aloud, as if despairing to get the better of the carpenter. 'He'll come to a bad end, I know he will!'

'But, ifserbe, sir, that I disappoint your expectations,' submitted Spike, 'and don't die in a prison after all, and don't otherwise turn out all I ought to do, you won't be too 'ard on my mem'ry, sir, I 'ope.'

Vasper regarded the discomfited Peevers with a smile that seemed intended for congratulation. The Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle contemplated Spike as though from an eminence, whence the carpenter appeared a something almost indistinguishable. Mr. Chamfer twitched with indignation. Mr. Stopp looked round as if

to inquire whether it wasn't high time for the weight of *his* vocabulary to be brought to bear upon this very disrespectful person.

While Spike himself, having bowed politely to the ladies, and conveyed to the gentlemen, by means of several cheery waves of the hand, a silent assurance that he would see them again soon, retired with Richard.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

THAT evening, while Mr. Jack Gurgoyne, amid the quiet of his own bed-chamber, was seeking, and not vainly, in sleep for temporary forgetfulness of what to his now recovered senses appeared the unspeakable folly of the day, Matthew was seated in a comfortable and shadowy corner of the drawing-room of Mrs. Parlbys's so-called 'Cottage.'

Near him, and, as usual, as much at her bodily ease as position and cushions could make her, lounged Pattie. The dexterous play of her fan, while continually revealing to her gratified vision the pretty jewels with which she delighted to load her dainty hands, shut out at pleasure the glance of every one but Matthew.

'And *now*, Mr. Bernock,' she breathed, 'do tell me, now do—it isn't true—now, is it?—what they say about your friend, Mr. Gurgoyne?'

'And what do they say?' inquired Matthew, softly.

'That he gets—that he gives way to drink—that he is fond of drink.'

'Fond of it?' repeated Matthew. 'If by that it is meant he is fond of it in the sense of being fond of the taste of it—no; it would be a dangerous look-out for him if he was—I hope he never will be. But as to giving way to it, because of its exhilarating effect on the mind in the hour of gloom and depression, and of the delusive joy it adds to the pleasure of congenial company—yes, I fear he is giving way to it, against his own wish, and to his cost, mentally and materially.'

'But, if he continues, it will get stronger hold of him,' said Pattie, with much feeling, 'and it will lead to his ruin!'

'Undoubtedly, calmly replied Matthew, 'if he continues.'

'But, Mr. Bernock,' she exclaimed, almost, as it seemed, in reproach, and as though Matthew must look to it, 'what a *pity* that a young man like that'—it may here be recalled that Jack was a good eight years older than Pattie; but in the maternal view of woman man is ever a sort of big boy—'and with such talent!'

'And with such prospects!' added the wily Matthew, 'business flowing in from all sides!—fortune, perhaps fame, within his grasp!'

'What a *pity*,' continued Pattie, 'that that young man should be left to ruin himself—simply left to throw himself away!'

'It is,' acquiesced Matthew.

'But don't you advise him?'

'Oh yes; but without very great success so far.'

'Can no one prevail with him?'

'Yes; there is *some one* who could—you know what I mean—but—'

'Is he fond of some one?' asked Pattie, with a sudden shade over her face.

'Yes; very fond.'

'But she likes some one else?' inquired Pattie.

'I don't think so.'

'Then she does not care for him?'

'Yes,' slowly replied Matthew, 'I begin to think she does.'

'Then why doesn't she take him?'

'Well, he hasn't asked her yet.'

'But why doesn't he?' naturally asked Pattie.

'He is afraid, because he thinks she doesn't care about him.'

'But you say she does.'

'Yes; but he doesn't know it.'

'And he doesn't try to find out whether she does or not?'

'Oh yes, but he can never get at her when she's alone; a man does not like to bawl these things out in public, you know.'

'Then her people don't approve of him for her?—they are always on the watch.'

'Not at all. And the worst of it is, *she* isn't. The fact is, she is blind.'

'Poor thing!'

'And there is something else still; it's her own fault.'

'What is?'

'That she can't see.'

'You mean to say that she was the cause of her own blindness? How *shocking*. How did she do it?'

'By standing in her own light.'

'Oh, you were talking figuratively all the time! How stupid you are! I thought you were talking seriously. She isn't blind after all!'

'I *am* talking seriously, and she *is* blind—blind to what other people can see, namely, that there is a young man, endowed with great talent, great energy, inexhaustible kindness of heart and habitual gentleness of manner, with first-rate business prospects, that is, with first-rate chances of making money, who only needs a word, even a look of encouragement, to throw himself at her feet; that it only needs the gentle influence she would have over him as his wife to steady him and induce him to turn his fine opportunities to the good of himself and of others.'

'But how can she know if he has never told her?'

'Well, before his prospects were assured—when, in fact, his prospects were most uncertain—he kept silence, partly because he shrank from ridicule, and partly, it should to his honour be said, because he thought it would be unjust to ask a woman to share what might turn out at any moment a life of poverty.'

'But since his position has become assured—well, at least, improved?'

'He has had no opportunity or encouragement sufficient, in his view of the matter, to warrant him in confessing himself. The lady appears to be withdrawing herself from the world, to be giving herself up—'

'To religion?' inquired Pattie, with an air that grew suddenly rapt.

'Well, not so much to religion, I should say,' replied Matthew, 'as to the ceremonies and other symbolic manifestations of religion.'

'They are most important,' observed Pattie, 'as reminders and supports to the faltering child of clay.'

'I express no opinion about them myself,' rejoined Matthew, 'beyond saying that they do seem to me to fit girls more for the cloister than for the hearth. Religion should fit girls to become good wives and mothers, and then, whether they marry and have children or not, they will be good women.'

Pattie remained silent for a time, with a touch of real sadness—not the somewhat too palpable air of submission and resignation she had been assuming of late—in her expression; it might almost be called a look of discontent.

'And does he love her so much then?' she asked at length.

'He does.'

'She ought to be very happy,' murmured Pattie.

'He will be very happy when he hears that,' said Matthew, quickly.

'Why?'

She asked this very composedly; nevertheless, as it seemed to Matthew, with a certain air of consciousness that made him wonder whether she had not divined more of his purpose than she had appeared to do.

'Because after the favourable sentiment you have just uttered, he will know that he may at length venture to ask you to be—that is, if he may hope that some day he may ask—'

'What?' asked Pattie, with simplicity.

'He will tell you himself on the first opportunity that—offers.'

Previously conscious or not of what he was coming to, she flushed crimson. Whether with simple surprise, or with pleasure, he did not remain to inquire.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

HIS name was called by Mrs. Parlbay, and he went to join the party on the other side of the room—the same party into which he had so suddenly descended from the ladder earlier in the day, saving that Vasper was not present.

'We have been reviewing the work that Miss Hunston has already accomplished in the village,' said the good lady, laying down her knitting for an instant; 'and, notwithstanding the admirable beginning that has been made—'

'I am not wholly satisfied,' finished Kate.

This she addressed to the ever-jubilant Mr. Maybright, who always believing that what appeared to him a happy phrase—and nearly every phrase uttered by any other person than himself did seem to the amiable sailor parson marvellously happy—should be emphasised by instant repetition, rejoined,—

'Notwithstanding the admirable beginning that has been made !'

Matthew saw that Kate was in a pout about something ; he saw, also, that though he had been pointedly summoned from his close deliberation in that shady corner of the room, she pointedly ignored his presence ; but he did not see, for all his recent remarks on figurative blindness, what it was that made her pout. He accordingly waited in silence.

'You have already provided for the comfort and decency of many families,' resumed Mrs. Parlby, 'by improving several of the cottages, and, to meet the case of dwellings which are beyond all improvement, you are planning the erection of a great number of new ones—'

'Which, judging,' observed Kate, 'from how the improvements already made are appreciated and attended to, we shall have the greatest difficulty in making the occupants keep in decency and comfort.'

'Oh yes, you are undoubtedly quite right,' acquiesced Mr. Stopp, not slow to encourage the slightest turn of opinion against undertakings in which Matthew was virtually the leader ; 'it is a hopeless task trying to—er—instil into the minds of persons of this—er—class ideas of ensuring for themselves decency and comfort.'

'Against that statement,' exclaimed Mrs. Parlby, with unusual emphasis, 'I must strongly protest. The majority of our labouring population have a very distinct perception and appreciation of decency and comfort, and, as a rule, they carry out their ideas in those matters to the utmost of their power.'

'But the minority of our own labouring population—on these estates, I mean,' said Kate ; 'the minority, who are not such paragons—'

'Them you will gradually influence and instruct by all that you are doing,' replied Mrs. Parlby. 'Don't allow yourself to be discouraged, my dear Kate. Be sure of this, you are following the right course. Amongst other things, you are organising a garden show for the summer. This will give you at once a direct influence over the outside surroundings of the home, and the prudence and tidiness induced by that good influence will extend from what we may call the publicity of the garden to the privacy of the hearth.'

'Admirable, admirable !' cried Kate, who, whatever were the depressing conclusions to which she may have caused Matthew to come, had herself rapidly risen in spirits since she had observed, from the corners of her eyes, that he had not only remained, but had seated himself within her circle. 'Really, auntie, dear, you talk with the subtlety of a Jesuit !'

'Prapth with not tho muth sublety ath innothent hopefulneth,' lisped Mr. Chamfer, who, starting from some uncertain idea which years ago had floated into his mind, and which had been accentuated by an ecclesiastical connection of his wife's, regarded himself as, in some sort, a kind of architectural outlying support to St. Peter's, and as, therefore, somehow called upon to resent anything like a hostile reflection upon an order which—in point of fact—was rather—well, most intimately, if it came to that—connected with architecture. 'Men like uth, alwath coming into contact with the world, know too well what thort of a perthon the Britith workman ith.'

To these two statements Mrs. Parlbby was careful not to reply; first, because she thought a challenge to what is ironically called a 'religious' discussion was intended; and secondly, because she had a well-founded suspicion that Mr. Chamfer was pugnaciously excited by an extra glass of wine.

'You are providing a reading-room,' she said, turning again to Kate, 'where counter-attractions to those afforded by the public-house are to be found.'

'And to which most of the people,' observed Kate, 'being wholly or almost illiterate, will never repair, I suppose.'

'In any case, the younger generations will benefit by it,' returned the elder lady; 'and as for the older and less instructed ones, I am sure they have been much amused, and in many other ways much benefited, by the weekly entertainments you have succeeded in arranging for them.'

'And, as for the elder ones—those whom, under a rough classification, we may call the married ones,' hazarded Matthew, 'the reading-room and the weekly entertainments, and so forth, are not intended so much for them—not so much needed by them—as the younger ones, whose exuberant energies and unoccupied thoughts must have employment—bad or good—even in the hours of leisure: the elder ones—the burdened ones—after the regular toil of the day, find the diversion of looking after their own immediate interests in their own gardens quite amusing enough, not to say quite fatiguing enough, without looking further for recreation—unless it is to the public-house; and what they want in lieu of the latter, is enjoyment inside the walls of their own dwellings.'

'And that,' said Kate, 'is just what all our fine schemes don't seem calculated to give them. Improved dwellings, dry floors, sufficient sleeping space, unpolluted wells, and all that comes under that head; reading-rooms and weekly entertainments; garden shows, and sports on the green or in the park—all excellent in their way, and therefore things to be kept going—'

'Most excellent!' observed Mrs. Parlbby.

'But not much more touching the real misery beneath our eyes, than the Temperance Club joined only by men who feel no desire to drink, or the Blanket Club joined only by women with no money to save.'

'What is this real misery beneath our eyes to which you point?' asked Mrs. Parlby. 'I am sure spiritual destitution cannot be charged against our parish.'

'No; the spiritual wants of the people here are, I admit, well attended to,' replied Kate. 'We have the ministers of three sects, the staffs of three Sunday Schools, one General Bible Class, several Voluntary Bible Readers—all doing good work. The Reverend Mr. Gurgoyne shakes his head, I see.'

'They cannot *all* be right,' explained that young gentleman.

'They are *all* right in winning and encouraging followers of Christ,' returned Kate.

'But the evil you were pointing to, dear?' asked Mrs. Parlby.

'It is the poverty—the grinding privation the people here seem to labour under.'

'Well, but, dear, you must always expect to find poverty amongst the poor,' rejoined the good lady.

The amiable Mr. Maybright thought this reply so marvellously happy in completely meeting the case, that he called immediate attention to it by repeating it—showing his brilliant teeth, and turning purple with pleasure.

'These poor people, as you call them,' exclaimed Mr. Peevers, clearing his throat, as a warning to the rest to keep silent for a few moments, 'they've got no business to be poor down here in the country. They've got gardens, and most of 'em keeps a pig, and their rent is small, and if their earnings is small also, why, directly the children get big enough, they each begin to bring in a trifle, and there's the extra work in harvest times, which the wives can join in then, besides light jobs suited to them, like picking stones and weeding, at other times, and they have their gleanings. Poor, indeed! Look at me—am I poor? and yet people haven't left *me* no gleanings to pick up. Let the poor practise thrift as I have done.'

'But a good many of them have to lose several days' work, and this not once in the winter, but in some winters frequently,' opposed Kate.

'The best hands don't lose much time,' retorted Peevers; 'there's always something found for them to do.'

'But the others, the more numerous class?' inquired Kate.

'They should put by against a rainy day when work is plentiful,' returned Peevers.

'Put by, when they never have anything to spare?' asked Matthew. 'All that they get is wanted before it is earned.'

'Because they don't spend their money to advantage,' said Peevers; 'they don't go for everything to the best market.'

'They have only one market to go to,' replied Matthew; 'the place where the "shop-book" chains them by the leg to the man at "the shop"; who provides them—readily in prosperous times—with half-ounces of broom-leaf tea, and with good stale quartern loaves; with slices of rusty bacon and screws of rank tobacco—the flavour of both of them, let it be remembered, only coming out to

advantage after you have stretched your legs for a few hours over a ploughed field;—with candles and herrings and soap, and—in the rare case, where the women know what to ask for, as at the same time cheap and nourishing—coarse oatmeal;—to the man at the “shop,” who does not utterly desert them in moments of the most desperate need;—to the man at “the shop” to whom they feel bound, as well by gratitude as by debt. Yes; debt is the fetter-log which hampers their movements.’

‘And, I suppose,’ observed Mr. Chamfer, who was beginning to think that the company must be getting impatient to hear him say something more, ‘that *we*, who don’t live beyond our incomes, are to be called upon to pay their debts for them!’ And then, yielding to the sensation that his mind had been delivered of an epigram—or something almost as good—he lost controul over his speech, and lisped—‘A nithe prothpect!’

‘Well, suppose,’ said Kate, turning to Matthew, ‘*we did* pay their debts—that is, the debts of some of them—just by way of seeing the result.’

‘Suppose,’ suggested Matthew, ‘you advanced, in the cases selected for experiment, the necessary sum as a loan, to be repaid in prosperous times, so that they might have the chance of once more trying, with the aid of hard experience, and with ready money in their hands, how to husband their earnings to the best advantage?’

‘They would be back on your hands,’ observed Mr. Stopp, closely examining some new sleeve-links he had adorned himself with, ‘as soon as ever the—er—man at the shop had allowed them to run the length of their tether again.’

‘In the case of the improvident, no doubt,’ remarked Matthew; ‘but, in the first place, we should select the least improvident; and by such a process we might gradually be able, by working down the scale, to bring the most improvident into habits of thrift. What is wanted is, a little timely help for those who really want it, and who are willing and able to take advantage of it.’

‘Why,’ cried Mr. Peevers, covering his eyes, as if to shade them from the gush of light which suddenly smote them, ‘that’s like a town friendly society!’

‘And if, by a little judicious lending—not giving,’ observed Matthew, ‘the villagers here can be induced to establish and subscribe to a friendly society, or any other society intended to meet hard times, or to put money into the Post Office Savings Bank, don’t you think a little judicious lending—not giving—would be worth the risk?’

‘Yes, yes,’ said Kate; ‘Mr. Bernock, you will give me a list of persons you recommend: I wish to try that experiment.’

‘I remember an anecdote to the point,’ mentioned Matthew, ‘told me by a daughter of a great house,’ he added, turning to the amiable and effervescent and high-born Reverend Algernon Maybright, who rose on the spot as if prepared to prove the allusion, whatever it



might be; 'she told me that a navvy who, besides listening to her religious ministrations, had borrowed ten shillings of her, had come and said, "There, my lady, there's what I borrowed, and there's twopence for the interest, my lady;" and she said "thank you," and took it, because she thought it better for him to regard the transaction in the light of pure business and not of charity; she wished him to have it in his mind that he had not only paid back the loan, but had also paid for the accommodation.'

'And, I suppose,' observed Mr. Stopp, 'that—er—most exemplary navvy, having given such proof of his spotless integrity, as soon after as ever he decently could, tested the great lady's trust in him to the tune of a ten-pound note, which he never found himself in a position to repay?'

'Perhaps he did,' said Kate; 'but I am going to try this experiment in a few cases.'

'A few cases only,' added Matthew; 'where, for instance—and there are many such—the persons have started imprudently for the want of experience, or have got into a hole through imprudence, and have never been able to get a clear start again.'

'And this experiment,' continued Kate, 'must be the preliminary to inducing the people to form a friendly society of some sort among themselves, or to put money into the Post Office Savings Bank, so that they may provide against a day of need themselves.'

'And this experiment,' added Matthew, 'is not to be regarded as suggesting a national experiment of the same kind by the Government; though as for that, we need not go back to the ancient Romans to find a precedent for either public gift or public loan to the needy. Quite recently, in a famous part of the country, Parliament has authorised both one and the other, in so freehanded a spirit, in fact, as to take some people's breath away. No, Miss Hunston's experiment, if it succeed, will serve to exemplify simply this: one of the ways in which individual aid can promote individual effort; a way which, followed all over the land according to means and opportunity, might perhaps do as much good as, for instance, that much-practised remedy, the Propagation of a Knowledge of Statistics concerning Drunkenness and Thrift, which, interesting and valuable as such knowledge is, affords, after all, no tangible and immediate help in making a fresh start in life. This, above all, whatever Miss Hunston attempts, she has, I believe, this conviction: the working man can be aided, but no aid, parliamentary or individual, material or moral, can enable him to dispense with his own individual effort; in short, that the working man's future depends in the main upon himself.'

'That is my conviction,' said Kate.

In going away, Matthew passed again by that shady corner and whispered to Pattie,—

'And you won't hinder our friend from taking advantage of the first opportunity that—offers?'

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIX months later—six months in which many events of great interest to Thatchley had occurred. The Reading-room and Library had been opened, and the Garden Show had taken place.

The event, however, which had gathered most interest about it was a double wedding. On the day that Mrs. Parlbly took the Reverend Algernon Maybright's name, Pattie took that of Mr. Jack Gurgoyle.

Kate accompanied Mrs. Parlbly in her change of residence from the 'Cottage' to the rectory; and the 'Cottage' was given up to the use of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Gurgoyle—the rising young architect making no trouble about driving over to his business at Carborough every morning.

On the day which the course of this narrative has now reached—a bright day at the end of August—the *new* Mrs. Maybright—as she was with unnecessary particularity called, for the seafaring parson had never been married before—was walking across the rectory lawn with Matthew, whose trap, in the care of Richard, was waiting under the trees. The amiable lady had a letter in her hand.

'And so,' she said, 'you see we may expect him back from Australia almost any day.'

'I shall be delighted to see Lenny again,' replied Matthew.

'Listen,' continued the lady, reading; '“I am looking forward to seeing Mat Bernock again. Tell him his refusal to let me take that last glass I was so bent on ordering the evening before my departure had an unexpected good effect on me. It left me strength of head enough to resist going to a certain supper, at which and after which I should certainly have made a fool of myself, and at which all the rest, as I regretfully heard before going abroad, did make fools of themselves, getting into a great deal of trouble. If I had been one of them, I must have lost my boat—and you know what a loss that would have been in the state your affairs were then in, not to mention the many attendant losses besides; *instead of which*, as somebody said on a celebrated occasion” (you see poor Lenny has not altogether lost his habit of dashing at sentences as well as at other things) “there, as I stood, fresh and clear, and with nothing of the blues about me, a letter was handed to me from Mat with something in it. The difference between the cheery state I was then in and the state I should certainly have been in if I had taken that last glass so struck me, that I then and there resolved never to take another last glass again; and—will you believe it?—I never have. Would any kind, inquiring friends like to know how?” Just heark at the boy!’ exclaimed Mrs. Maybright.

'I should like to know how, very much,' remarked Matthew. 'It is a question which a great many people I have known would like to hear answered.'

'“By never taking the first,”’ read the lady. ‘“It is a very difficult thing to avoid the first glass,”’ she continued, still reading;

"but nothing like so difficult, after the first few days, as deciding which shall be the last. As to avoiding the first, that is a struggle which is difficult only at the beginning (and even then isn't difficult at all when a good bout of sea-sickness gives a good start by enforcing abstinence), and gets easier and easier every day; while, as to deciding which shall be the last, that is a struggle which never grows easier, and is very likely to grow much more difficult."

'He is right there,' observed Matthew.

'Listen again,' said Mrs. Maybright, reading on: "'Of course, for any one who always has his self-interest so distinctly before him that he can always determine which must be the last glass, teetotalism is a thing to adopt only as an example; but for those who are liable to be put off their guard as I am, that much-derided profession is a necessity.'"

'I agree with him,' commented Matthew. 'But what I always try to find out with regard to the two resolutions, as to no glass or as to the last glass, is: what external aids do they—I won't say look to—but recommend?'

'Listen to him again; and teetotalism seems to have sharpened the dear boy's observation,' said Mrs. Maybright. 'He says: "I have tried in my travels to find out how different people adhere to teetotalism; and I always find the thing resolves itself into this—self-control?"'

'No doubt,' observed Matthew. 'And I suppose self-control in a matter *which people will always persist in regarding as a private one* will never be promoted by coercion.'

'By what then?'

'By every sort of help, which does not excite resentment and consequent opposite action.'

'There is a difference of opinion about that, isn't there?' returned the lady with a smile.

'But, Richard,' she continued, approaching the dog-cart, 'there is a message for you also. Mr. Lenny, who is on his way back to England, and will, I hope, soon be here, wishes to be kindly remembered to you.'

Richard touched his hat and seemed after reflection to have decided that this response was enough—relieving his feelings, as soon as he saw he was not observed, by spitting across an adjacent bush.

'And Richard's mother and her little ones, and Spike himself?' asked Mrs. Maybright of Matthew, 'are they still going on well?'

'Yes—on the whole—yes,' replied Matthew; 'but I shall call at Common Side in passing this morning.'

'But stay, I had nearly omitted one thing,' suddenly added Mrs. Maybright. 'Lenny says that he has a curious message for you.'

'From whom?'

'He says he must tell you that himself.'

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

DRIVING along to the carpenter's house at Common Side, Matthew's thoughts more than once turned with curiosity to the 'message' that was to be brought to him by Lenny.

His curiosity was again roused on entering Mrs. Spike's neatly kept 'living-room' and seating himself near the window, so that while talking he might get a view of the carpenter's work in the trim garden. On the window-board lay a letter newly stamped as if ready for the post. Matthew's eye caught the address; it was to Mr. Raymond Filps, in London. Fearing that the carpenter's efforts to clear himself of old and hampering debts had not yet been entirely successful, he said, nodding towards the address:

'Are you still in that person's grasp for old liabilities in London, Mrs. Spike?'

'Oh no, sir,' said Mrs. Spike hurriedly, and then with confusion, and uselessly, she put the letter on the mantelpiece.

'Excuse me for having taken notice of the letter,' said Matthew, 'but I was afraid for the moment that Spike might not have been able to get completely from under that man's thumb; and as I have called more especially to hear how your husband is getting on—I mean whether he is still content with his new home, I thought the question not wholly disconnected with the subject.'

'No, sir,' added Mrs. Spike, not yet recovered from her confusion, 'it's only a little matter between Spike and Mr. Filps.'

'A little matter between those two!' thought Matthew—'the last two on earth between whom, once their cantankerous dealings with each other being over, I should have thought any little matter so interesting as to require written correspondence likely to have remained open. However, it doesn't concern me, I suppose.'

'And how *is* Spike getting on?' he asked aloud.

'Pretty well, on the whole, Mr. Matthy, thanks to you, sir.'

'Pretty well on the whole generally means rather bad in some particular,' observed Matthew. 'And that leads me to what I wanted to ask you, Mrs. Spike. How did it happen last week—in fact, how has it happened twice before—that he has been absent from his work a couple or three days at a stretch?'

'Why, sir, you see he has had a great deal to do in the garden: you can see that for yourself by looking out of the window; and he has done up the pigstye, and he is knocking together a hen-house and—'

'But, on each of these occasions, Mrs. Spike, it has reached my ears—and you know these things will reach one's ears whether one asks for them or not—that he was—well, in the old way again; and I saw signs of it in his face and manner after each occasion on his returning to work. And yet I know he does not go to the "White Horse," or to any other place of that sort near about.'

'Why, no, Mr. Matthy; he knows you told him it was to be

a condition that he didn't go to them, and he knows what it would be to get turned out of his place and lose this new home.'

'And Carborough is too far away: so, how is it?' asked Matthew.

'And he often repeats what you told him,' added Mrs. Spike, with evident evasion: 'you remember, sir, about Mr. Resolution and that smart dog Watch that he was always to keep with him to get Mr. Resolution woke up in time. He says, that's the maxum to work upon, sir, and he do work on it very well on the whole, Mr. Matthy, now, don't he, sir?'

'But he didn't on those particular occasions, Mrs. Spike; and that shows there is still some source of danger open to him. Come, now, you know I am not asking out of idle curiosity, but only out of anxiety for his good: he gets a supply of spirits from the grocer's or from Carborough into the house?'

'Well, sir, you know you can't bar a man of every place: if he's determined to have it, he'll find out some way of getting it: none of their laws will ever stop that, sir; and cert'n'y, sir, it isn't altogether well to be without a drop in the house in case of illness or whatnot.'

'Yes, but it is the cases which come under the head of "what-not" which provide the danger,' said Matthew. 'Well, you see the new danger: what must we depend on now?'

'I tell him he must depend on his own self-controul, sir.'

'Aided by amusing occupation for his leisure hours,' added Matthew.

'And he's got that, sir, thanks to your goodness; he's got his garden, and his pig and his fowls—'

'And I see, Mrs. Spike,' added Matthew, looking round the room and into a small kitchen behind, 'he has also got a clean, comfortable home kept ready for him when he comes indoors.'

'Well, sir, without that you can't wonder if a man goes off to find it at the public-house.'

'And so,' thought Matthew, 'trace it how we may, it always comes back to the individual's practice of self-controul.'

---

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

'BUT, begging your pardon,' observed the carpenter's wife, seeing that Matthew remained without speaking, as if in thought, 'Spike isn't the only one.'

'Well, well, of course not: there are a great many husbands like yours, Mrs. Spike.'

'And wives as well, Mr. Matthy; you know what I'm thinking of, sir.'

'Well, generally, yes,' replied Matthew.

'And her so young, too!—and not six months married!' ejaculated Mrs. Spike.

'Some one you know, I suppose?'

'And some one you know too, Mr. Matthy.'

'Indeed! I don't know what you are alluding to.'

'You haven't heard yet, sir, of what happened up at the Beeches?'

'No; and I didn't know that any one there had been married, or that there had been any one there to marry.'

'I am not talking of any one belonging there, sir; I am talking of Miss Pattie as was—Mrs. Jack Gurgoyle, as they now call her.'

'And what about her?' asked Matthew, with unconcealed surprise.

'To think of her taking to it at her age, which cert'n'y many do, only she has taken to it so quick: that Mr. Jack must have taught her: he always was a nice gentleman—that everybody must and do say; but I remember how fond of his glass he was in London.'

'What do you mean? what is it you are insinuating against Mrs. John Gurgoyle?' asked Matthew, with darkening brow.

'Begging your pardon, sir, but I would never insinuate anything against nobody; it's a thing I always held myself above.'

'Yes, yes, but what gossip, I mean, is this you have got hold of?'

'Excuse me, Mr. Matthy, sir, but I'm not given to gossip neither: it's one of them habits I never would practise, though I have known folks keep me an hour and two hours at a time listening to the tales they'd pick up here and there.'

'Well, what tale is this that somebody has been forcing you to listen to?'

'A tale, Mr. Matthy!' exclaimed Mrs. Spike. 'Why, I had it from the lips of them that *saw* it, sir.'

'Saw what?'

'Why, she would have fell on the ground, sir, if Mr. Jack hadn't been there to save her.'

'When?'

'Only Tuesday last, sir; which it had been planned Mr. Jack was to drive her in his dog-cart round by the Beeches, to see the new conservatory the old gentleman had made, and to leave her to spend the afternoon with the old lady; and to call for her going back, which he did, and—'

'Well?'

'And—would you believe it, sir?—she tumbled against the shaft, so that the horse was like to have bolted, and when her husband was helping her up to her seat, she fell right back into his arms!'

'It is quite clear that she was suddenly taken ill: ladies—at certain times, don't you know, Mrs. Spike?—are subject to sudden attacks of indisposition.'

'But even when she went to the Beeches her face was quite red, sir.'

'Nothing unusual in that in a hot August sun.'

'But them as I had it from, sir, know that something more than tea was drunk by the two old people and Mrs. G. at the afternoon tea: they know how much brandy disappeared.'

'Old people sometimes depend a good deal on a little brandy, and Mrs. Gurgoyle may have been pressed against her will to take a teaspoonful in her tea.'

'But how about the bottles of brandy that are always going from the grocer's to the "Cottage," sir?'

'I suppose there is nothing wonderful in Mr. Gurgoyle now and then offering his friends a glass of brandy,' returned Matthew.

'But it's quite well known, sir, that Mr. Gurgoyle deals with a wine and spirit merchant at Carborough; and they say the bottles from the grocer's go in even the very day after supplies have been sent from Carborough.'

'Take my word for it, Mrs. Spike, all this is mere idle gossip or malicious scandal; young English women of Mrs. Jack Gurgoyle's class are not in the habit of drinking spirits.'

'I never heard of them doing it, sir, myself,' corroborated Mrs. Spike.

'Certain foreigners say they do; but our own knowledge of England shows us at once that they are foreigners who have never been in England.'

'I never knew such a case before, sir, cert'n'y.'

'And you don't know such a case now: you have only heard that there is such a one.'

Notwithstanding, he went away astounded—wounded, stricken with fear, lest such a thing might be true.

Could it be that instead of Pattie leading Jack, Jack had, with characteristic thoughtlessness, led her—whither he had never dreamt of?

Matthew had still to receive the 'curious message' from Lenny; but he thought, however curious it might be, it could hardly be more startling than the communication which had just been made to him.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

ABOUT a week after this long conversation, Mr. Jack Gurgoyle had occasion to call on Matthew. The business over, the host said,—

'Well now, Jack, this being about the hour at which we both allow ourselves a refresher, let us have it. I find the system of a stated daily allowance, taken at or about stated times, quite meets all bodily wants, and is not very difficult to follow, if you never deviate from it by the space of even one glass; in fact, that is where the only difficulty now lies—in continually resisting that one other glass each time you refresh yourself.'

While speaking, he had got out of a sideboard a bottle, and, from the top of it, glasses and water. Having put all on the table, he looked up for Jack, and observed the latter with his back towards him, standing in the bay of the window, and gazing across at the decayed village stocks.

'Isn't that the principal difficulty, eh, Jack?' continued Matthew.

'No, I don't find that the difficulty, Mat; because I never refresh myself in that way at all now. I have turned teetotaler. I find the drive in the open air to Carborough and back every day and the exercise on foot which I take sufficient to give me so fine an appetite that I can eat enough to enable me to do without any other stimulant.'

'Is it true, then, what Mrs. Spike related about Pattie?' *thought* Matthew.

Then he observed aloud:—

'I am very glad to hear that, Jack.'

'And, Mat, when you come to my house, you won't be astonished to find that I am so strict an observer of teetotalism that I don't even keep anything intoxicating on the premises to offer to friends?'

In so saying he turned round with a look of such solemnity that Matthew could not help returning the look, with something besides of inquiry in it.

'Do you know why, Mat?'

After reflection, Matthew answered,—

'To save you the pain of explanation, Jack, I had better say, Yes; since you seem to be determined to explain.'

'The reason why I wish to explain,' said Jack, 'is that I can't bear to think that you should believe it was her own fault, poor darling. No, Mat, the fault was entirely mine.'

'But what does it matter, after all, Jack? It will never happen again, and therefore all people worth considering will never mention it, and will regard any allusion to such a thing not only as malicious but as imbecile. And what is there to make allusion to, Jack?—that a lady for once in her life when leaving a friend's house suddenly became unwell, and beyond that, only mere gossip about—I don't know what. You can't stop people gossiping, and there are always some people to put the worst construction upon everything.'

'I don't care what other people *say*,' said Jack; 'but I do care, Mat, what you may be induced to *think*. Listen.'

'If you think it necessary, Jack.'

'When we were abroad on our little tour, you know, we were kept out once a whole day, and when we got into a place of shelter, wet and tired, she was completely done for. Fearing she might fall ill with it all, I made her take some brandy in a cup of tea. She resisted at first, but when she found how it revived her I had no difficulty in persuading her to take some more; and always after that when she was overdone with fatigue, and sometimes with wet weather, for we walked and rode and coaxed with great energy all the time, I always proposed brandy; and after we returned home whenever she seemed tired with the day's duties, I would always suggest a tablespoonful of brandy in some water. I never thought—yes, I did think of the danger; but when I saw her tired I thought I ought to make her rouse up and be merry;



and that was where I was selfish. I knew what the cursed thing is, and she didn't.'

'And poor Jack didn't reflect,' thought Matthew, 'that, with so exceptionally emotional a temperament as his wife has, alcohol is the very last thing in the world to subject her to the risk of yielding to.'

'Well,' he remarked aloud, 'this danger is over now, Jack?'

'Yes, I was so frightened at what I had run a risk of doing, that I told her business being so very much on the increase with me now, I needed constant coolness of head, and that alcohol robbed me of this; and so, I said, I must turn teetotaler, and, would she mind, I asked, if, to make total abstinence easier for me, we kept nothing intoxicating in the house? And the dear creature, directly she thought it was for my good, fell in with the proposition at once, and said she was so proud of me for making such an effort, and she would do everything to aid me in it.'

'And the plan is entirely successful?' said Matthew.

'Entirely: the poor darling has sent all our little cellar to the parson to add to his stores for the sick, and she talks of giving the servants beer-money instead of beer.'

'So there is a good result all round,' remarked Matthew; 'but you see, Jack, that the cure of a love of strong drink is not always with certainty to be found even in the love of the purest and tenderest of wives.'

'Well, certainly not,' exclaimed Jack, rousing for an instant from the subdued air which as yet was so unusual with him, but which was yet so much more becoming to him than his old high-pitched tone—'certainly not, if like a diabolical villain, as some would say, or like a damned, unthinking, selfish fool, as I was, you go and gradually drag her down from her purity with a horrible temptation! But luckily it rarely happens that any one is either such a villain or such a selfish fool as to do such a thing.'

'But when it does happen,' said Matthew, 'it unluckily rarely happens that the person who has unwittingly run the risk of doing such a thing acts with the decision and firmness you have shown in undoing the evil.'

'Ah!' replied Jack, with a shake of the head, 'the change is not due only to firmness and decision on my part.'

'To what else, Jack, if I may ask?'

'Imminent physical peril to myself, Mat.'

'I remember you spoke of that before your marriage,' said Matthew. 'Those nasty symptoms went on, eh?'

'Something worse following,' replied the contrite Jack. 'To the inability, which I before spoke of, to read or write or fix my eyes on anything, with that sensation of being about to lose the use of my right arm, before I had swallowed substantial food and strong drink of a morning, succeeded attacks which made me quake. Why, Mat, when an attack came on—generally after dressing in the morning, and always on an empty stomach—it was with difficulty I

could move *any* of my limbs ; there was an awful sinking-away of the heart, a whirling-away of the brain, a sense of the dreadful darkness of death gathering about me ; the thought that in this world the present for me was suddenly to cease, the future to stop short, an impenetrable darkness for ever, and that I was in an instant to become as much a matter of the past as an ancient Egyptian. I suppose the still strong reserve of vigour left in me at my age rebelled against such a thought, and against death I struggled ; tortured with the fear that I was going to leave *her*, gentle, confiding, inexperienced in the baseness of man, alone, to the mercy of the world, to the snares perhaps of a smooth-mannered, low-minded, heartless, brutal villain ; and I seemed to cry for help, for something to cling to, to hold me back to life that I might defend *her*—I could seize *her* hand in mine, I could clutch the chair—there was everything to aid the flesh ; but I was crying in my soul for something the intangible life might fasten on, but seemingly in vain. Mat, the sense of utter helplessness, with human help, with *her* tearful help, pressing round me was awful.

Matthew remained silent.

‘Why, going up a hill or any height,’ continued Jack, ‘would affect me so that I had to make a strong effort to prevent my weakened brain from reeling at the view of what lay at my feet. At the sight of dawn breaking over the horizon, such an overpowering image of the magnitude of this moving earth and of the distant sun would fill my mind that I would hasten back to bed to bury my head under the clothes and try not to think. The thought of death came now with terror—to me who had never feared death before, with overpowering, overwhelming conceptions of the awful magnitude of the universe. I imagined my liberated soul flying into dread gloom and seeing this huge sphere rolling through space, and cowered. The images which to the calm soul should bring only trustful love for the Omnipotent filled me with terror ; my enfeebled brain reeled at the mere conception of the superhuman ; it seemed to me that the awfulness of death lay in an aching powerlessness of the human brain to face infinite magnitudes—time, space, infinite succession, infinite co-extension—the mere thought made me giddy.’

‘And what remedy did you fly to?’ asked Matthew.

‘The quickest—brandy, whisky, ardent spirits of any sort. With that aid I recovered and the day would pass, only to be followed the next morning by the same suffering, in proportion to the extent of the previous day’s recourse to the remedy. And there’s the difficulty, when once the damned thing has got its foot well on you, it seems you *must* go to it to save your life—however much you want to get away from it.’

‘Why, Jack, you went every day within an inch of downright *delirium tremens*.’

‘Why, no doubt,’ acquiesced Jack.

‘I know a similar case where the opinions of four medical men at four different phases were given,’ said Matthew. ‘First medical

opinion : relaxed blood-vessels of the brain—mental rest—beware of ardent spirits. Second opinion : enfeebled heart—(*enfeebled*, not *constitutionally feeble*),—mental rest—nourishing beer or wine—of ardent spirits the less the better. Third opinion : more enfeebled heart, permanent dilatation of the eyes—take care !—*strictly limited* quantity of nourishing beer or wine—but only *one* glass of ardent spirits a day, and only *one* at the most. Fourth opinion : nervous system broken down for a time, circulation seriously involved—look out, or the devil to pay !—strictly limited quantity of nourishing beer or wine to be measured out from day to day without the slightest excess thereof—*absolute disuse of ardent spirits*—that is, if life is to be, not to say enjoyable, but even tolerable.’

‘Well,’ remarked Jack, ‘I am in no danger now. I escaped by risking the danger of dying for want of stimulants ; and being still strong enough, stood the strain—though it was a tough one. I have seen the error of my ways to my cost, and I have the dearest woman on earth to aid me to keep straight.’

‘Exactly,’ agreed Matthew, ‘but the moral I was going to draw was—’

‘That though,’ completed Jack, ‘your own self-controul may be aided in many ways, not anybody nor anything can ever enable you to do without it.’

‘Good,’ said Matthew.

‘That sentiment is getting quite a familiar one,’ he thought. ‘But a little repetition is sometimes good.’

## CHAPTER XL.

LENNY was at length come back ; not richer yet than when he had left England, but more of a man, and a better man ; not only physically much stronger, but mentally and morally so. The self-control involved in vigorously maintaining the ‘teetotal’ principles which he had embraced had certainly in his case disciplined him into a trusty, energetic, self-reliant man.

‘Well, Mat,’ he said, while walking with the latter, ‘you didn’t expect when I set out that when I returned I should bring a message to you across the sea all the way from Australia?’

There was to be a dinner-party that night in his honour at the rectory, where a general gathering of friends was to take place ; and in the mean time there was to be an ‘afternoon tea’ in the famous Summer-House ;—whither his mother, and the parson, and Kate, and Pattie, and Jack, together with Vasper, and Messrs. Chamfer & Stopp, and Mr. Peevers and others who were invited to lend their several diversities to the company ; and Spike and his son Richard as being the most dexterous hands in the parish for filling the servants’ parts in what the former loosely called a ‘casual job of this sort,’ were all now gone.

It was to join this party at the Summer-House that Matthew and Lenny were now walking together on a bright September day.

'No, Lenny, Australia is the last quarter in the world from which I should have expected a message,' said Matthew, in reply to the other's remark; 'but you may be sure I shall do what is proper and natural in the matter.'

'By the way, Mat, of course mother knows no more about it than just this: that I had a message for you; and I sha'n't say anything else to her, and not even that much to anybody else if you don't wish me to do so.'

'Yes, say nothing about it to anybody—until I ask you,' said Matthew slowly; 'and that,' he added, reflectively, 'I suppose, I shall never have occasion to do.'

'Understood then,' returned Lenny, 'I shall not open my lips about it until you tell me to do so.'

They were now ascending the slope rising gently to the Summer-House. Scattered couples were straying about and intermingling under the trees. The warm September sun shone brightly but waningly on the changing tints which already were beginning to give gentle warnings of another year a-dying. Matthew remembered the similar scene on that similar September's day just a year ago.

What he missed from the scene—and he looked searchingly too—was Kate's figure.

'And so, Lenny,' he said, 'you think of returning to Australia after your holiday?'

'Yes,' replied Lenny, 'for those who can't stand a strictly sedentary occupation there is more room and chance there. And besides, I have gained experience in the country, and now I know how to lay out my little stock of money to the best advantage; it won't be mere blind venture now; win or lose, I shall at least know what I am about. Don't you remember, Mat, the sage advice you gave me on that head, on the eve of my departure—that memorable night at the "Pilgrims' Rest"?''

'I do, Lenny.'

'But oh, I say, Mat: talking of the "Pilgrims' Rest," you remember the manageress—as she was called—there?—that Mrs. Stoney-face—what was her name?'

'Mrs. Rawlins?' said Matthew. 'Oh yes, I remember her very well indeed: I ought to do: why, don't you know she was a very important—'

But he suddenly caught himself up in time. Mrs. Rawlins *had* been a very important, though an unseen link in the chain; but he remembered his promise to her: not to reveal—except in the face of absolute necessity—for the assertion of right—the fact of her existence as in connection with that chain.

'But what about her, Lenny?' he asked.

'Why, what brings *her* down here?'

'Here?—where?—Mrs. Rawlins *here*?—never, my boy!—what delusion are you labouring under?'

'None at all, Mat. I ought to know her by sight, at least, considering how carefully I once studied the lines of her visage. Why, Mat, didn't I make a "character" sketch of her face, as a companion sketch to one I had made somewhere down by the docks?'

'Yes, yes : well?'

'And wasn't it I who introduced you and Jack to a sight of her?'

'Yes : well?'

'Well?' repeated Lenny. 'Well, then I think I ought to know her when I saw her get out of a Carborough fly an hour ago and walk into the "White Horse"?''

'You saw *Mrs. Rawlins*—'

'Get out of a Carborough fly an hour ago, and walk into the "White Horse" along with a very fussy gentleman, whom I took to be her fellow-traveller, and whose name, if I remember rightly, is Mr. Raymond Filps.'

'Mrs. Rawlins and Mr. Raymond Filps, the London house agent?'

'Yes, of course ; he lives, or used to live, in the same quarter of London as you did. You seem as surprised, Mat, as I was.'

'Yes,' said Matthew.

That was all he said, but he fell to thinking. The letter addressed to Mr. Raymond Filps, and which Mrs. Spike had been so anxious to put away from his sight, came back to his mind.

Lenny, also, had fallen to thinking : they were now very near the steps of the Summer-House, and he was deliberating whether he should go and see how Spike and Richard were getting on with the preparations for afternoon tea, or whether he should join one of the groups under the surrounding trees.

'But look, Mat !' he suddenly cried. 'Why, what's the matter with Kate—Miss Hunston?'

She had come out hurriedly on to the platform, and stood there very pale and with eyes ablaze.

---

## CHAPTER XLI.

'WHERE is Mr. Bernock?' she cried. 'Isn't he come yet?'

Matthew in an instant stood before her.

'Come up, quick !' she said to him. 'Your presence is much needed here !'

He bounded up and entered the large summer room with her.

In the room stood Vasper and Mr. Chamfer's partner, Mr. Stopp ; who, bending over to examine one of his finger-rings, had something of a crouching air, and was white and trembling.

Vasper also was white, but not trembling : malignant determination was shown in every line of his face, most of all, perhaps, in his customary mechanical smile.

'This gentleman,' said Kate, indicating Stopp, 'has had the effrontery to make me an offer of marriage—or rather, I should say,

perhaps, he has had the effrontery to stand by while this other gentleman,' she explained, this time indicating Vasper, 'made it for him.'

'Tut, tut, about *effrontery* !' exclaimed Vasper. 'What effrontery is there in a man of his standing—he *is* a man of good professional standing, at least—making you an offer of his hand when his hand can confirm you in the possession of these estates?'

'There lies the effrontery,' returned Kate; 'as though I could be bought ! He talks of some mysterious deed of trust,' she continued, turning to Matthew, 'the possession of which is necessary to secure my title in this property.'

'Just so,' said Vasper, 'and you are sharp enough to understand your position : so drop all melodramatic nonsense about effrontery, and accept this gentleman's handsome offer : it *is* a handsome one, because being interested in his welfare—and at the same time wishing to do you a good turn—I have undertaken that it shall carry with it nothing less than the Thatchley estates.'

'You shall hear my answer,' said Kate.

Then turning again towards Matthew, she continued in low yet distinct tones—but for the first time with downcast eyes,—

'*You* have made me two offers : the first I rejected, thinking I had reason to do so ; the second I never replied to—'

She hesitated for a moment, still with downcast eyes.

'Because you never asked me to do so,' she finished.

Matthew moved eagerly towards her to explain.

'Now,' she continued, without stopping, 'here is my answer at last ; there is my hand—with the property or without it.'

Matthew bent low to kiss the outstretched hand.

'And there,' she said, turning round and confronting Vasper and Stopp, 'is yours.'

And Matthew felt the steely grip of the little hand within his own.

'Oh, very pretty, very pretty, I am sure !' applauded Vasper derisively. 'But that costs you your property.'

'Speak for me,' she whispered to Matthew.

'I say,' repeated Vasper, 'that that costs you your property.'

'We have only your word for that at present,' observed Matthew.

'Oh, so now we have to deal with Mr. Agent,' said Vasper.

Mr. Stopp supported the satire of this with a distortion of his features, which he meant for a smile, but which looked like a mild spasm of pain.

'You have now to deal with one,' returned Kate, 'who, if the property is still mine, is its future master?'

An undoubted spasm of pain crossed Stopp's face this time.

'But the property is *not* still yours,' jeered Vasper.

'Of course,' said Matthew, 'if there really is another claim to the estates, the person interested will take the necessary steps to enforce it ; while we, if the claim is one to be fought, shall know, depend upon it, how to fight it.'

Vasper smiled, and Stopp tried to do the same.

'But it is absurd,' continued Matthew, 'to stand here listening to shadowy menace. I will just remark, however, in conclusion, that if there really exists a rightful owner to the property other than Miss Hunston, and that you know it, then your proposition to her was iniquitous, and will not bear the light of a court of justice.'

'Iniquitous!' repeated Vasper, mockingly. 'And *you* talk of iniquity! And so you think, I suppose, by setting up to preach virtue, and championing the cause of a distressed heiress, to make up for the misfortune of your birth.'

'I see no misfortune in my birth,' said Matthew, 'remembering that my father was an honest man.'

No sooner were these words, rising so naturally to his lips, uttered, than he thought with a pang of Chipples' dark allusions—of that 'shame' to which his father himself on the night of his death had referred so unintelligibly.

'Your "uncle" you mean,' suggested Vasper, with a gentle smile, as if in mild correction. 'Oh, a *very honest* man!'

Matthew's fingers closed more tightly upon his cane, but that ugly recollection held him back.

'In any case,' said Kate, 'to Mr. Bernock himself is due the honour of having, at the cost of great pains, tracked out a great wrong, and of having brought it to light.'

'It was *I* who brought it to light,' returned Vasper, sharply, with very little of his smile left, 'voluntarily, and to the loss of the greater part of my income.'

'After the wrong had lain hidden,' retorted Kate, 'a suspiciously long time to your advantage.'

The sarcasm told, and he could not help showing it, the smile wholly vanishing now beneath a sudden contraction of the brows.

'Well, whoever discovery it was—supposing even it *was* his,' he said, recovering himself, 'it was worthless.'

'Why?' asked Matthew.

'Suppose,' replied Vasper, 'that her father, from whom she claimed, himself claimed from a convicted felon.'

'Well, suppose so,' said Matthew.

'Do you happen to know,' continued Vasper, 'that a conviction of felony is understood to carry with it a forfeiture of the convict's property to the crown?'

'I believe it is,' replied Matthew; 'but I am under the impression that the forfeiture is rarely enforced.'

'You know something about the subject, I see,' returned Vasper, 'but not all. The pitiful possessions of an ordinary felon are not usually seized to the use of the sovereign. But suppose the possessions rich, enormous, tempting, in the sight of zealous crown-officers: did you ever hear of the case of Lord —, who killed his man in a duel?'

'I have.'

'His legal advisers—as I have been told—thought it advisable,

before he was arraigned for trial before his peers, to vest his property in the hands of trustees, in case of his being found guilty. *They had some fears of a forfeiture, you see.*

'But supposing,' said Matthew, 'that Miss Hunston's father did unconsciously hold the property with a defective title, you, as his sister's son, coming after him, did so likewise, and so would any other member of the family do. Suppose the crown-officers to have such a claim as you hint at, and that they enforce it, the property is lost as much to one member of the family as to another.'

'But suppose,' rejoined Vasper—'to continue hypothetically—suppose I have a complete answer to any claim which the crown-officers might advance, in the shape of a deed of trust.'

'What trust?'

'Listen,' said Vasper. 'The convict was not in possession of his property at the time of his prosecution; he had only what is legally termed a contingent remainder—the reversion of the property on the death, without issue, of no less than three persons. Nevertheless, it was deemed prudent to make him vest his interest, such as it was, in the hands of trustees; and though the three persons standing before him were at the time all in excellent health, yet, strange to say, they all died, and without issue, during the term of his transportation; and so the deed of trust was found to have been no unnecessary precaution after all.'

'Well, then,' observed Matthew, 'that would be Miss Hunston's answer to any claim the crown-officers might be induced to make.'

Vasper resumed his smile.

'By my good favour, yes,' he said. 'I don't say that the deed is in my possession, or under my controul, mind.'

'No,' observed Matthew; 'that would be too dangerous an admission to make, wouldn't it, if the matter was made the subject of judicial inquiry?'

'But,' resumed Vasper, 'it can be made available for her protection on one condition.'

'That she accepts the offer which you have made her on behalf of this gentleman.'

'Yes.'

'As to the offer,' said Matthew, 'she has herself given you her answer, and in no unmistakable manner. As to this deed you talk of, I shall advise her to obtain the opinion of a competent authority as to the probability and the effect of any such claim as you mention arising on the part of the officers of the crown. The deed may not be essential to the validity of her title, and, in any case, she will not consent to hold the property at your pleasure on any terms.'

'Then,' returned Vasper, smiling in the midst even of the rage of defeat, 'imitating your example of following the path of strict justice, I shall do my best for *one who has a prior claim* to the estates.'

'A prior claim?' repeated Matthew.

'Yes,' replied Vasper, 'a prior claim, which any one has who is more nearly related than Miss Hunston to your father.'



‘To my father!’

‘Well, to your “uncle,” then, if you like that better; you called him by the other name just now.’

Matthew stood thunderstruck.

‘Your—well, not to refer to a relationship, the mention of which seems to confuse you, Richard Bernock, at one time, as it turns out, calling himself Richard Burgon, but for some time previous to his death known as Richard Bagnall—’

Matthew felt the blood leaving his extremities and his heart labouring.

‘This Richard Bernock,’ continued Vasper, ‘had another son—but that implies a further reference to your own delicate connection with him: well, then, he had a son who is living the life of a vagabond in Australia. Since you admit no compromise—since you demand strict justice, let justice be done. Richard Bernock’s son shall be produced, and the discovery, which, it is urged on your behalf, you made in this lady’s interest, will be worthless. She will be a beggar again.’

Matthew, whilst listening, was labouring to think calmly. Then—thus ran his thoughts—Richard Bernock, his father, was the convict, the lawful possessor, when he died, of the Thatchley and Broodley Water estates; and Vasper believed that he, Matthew, knew it, but knew it as a bastard, and therefore without interest.

‘You are silent,’ remarked Vasper, after a pause. ‘Your strict regard for justice will not remain inflexible, after all, perhaps.’

‘I am reflecting,’ said Matthew.

He was reflecting that if he, the lawful, the only *lawful* son of Richard Bernock, had possession of this deed of trust which was alleged to be in existence, he would be the undisputed master of Thatchley and Broodley Waters, and that consequently Kate would remain its mistress.

Then slowly, and like one awakening from sleep, he became conscious of something going on outside.

---

## CHAPTER XLII.

OF something which his mind could not for the moment grasp: the rapid movement of feet, a confused murmur of voices, quick exclamations made as if in sudden recognition.

‘Fanny!’ rang out the voice of Mrs. Maybright, formerly Mrs. Parlbly, with a sound in it of joyful relief.

‘Fanny!’ quavered the voice of Mr. Chamfer, with a sound in it of mingled stupefaction and expostulation.

‘Fanny!’ roared the hoarse voice of Peevers, with a ring of welcome in it.

Next, Matthew saw strutting about the room Mr. Raymond Filps.

Mr. Filps held in one hand an open memorandum book, with

which he was fanning his steaming countenance, and in the other a lead pencil, which he kept moistening between his lips, as a warning to all present that if any person made a self-incriminating remark, it would be set down and might be used against him.

He took off his hat to the room in general, and nodded to somebody at the other end of it.

'How d'ye do, Mr. Filps,' cried Spike the carpenter, in answer to this nod. 'Quite a surprise to see *you* down here, sir! but you're just in time to see it all come true, sir!'

Opening from the saloon, as it was called, was a sort of serving-room, where tea was made, and provisions unpacked; and leaning on the window-counter, over which the person in charge of this little room served out hot cups of tea to the attendant in the saloon, Spike and his son Richard had been unobserved but keen witnesses of the scene described in the last chapter.

Vasper looked round at them with an angry glare; still, not yet with the air of one who had any reason to care whether what he had said had been overheard or not.

Then, followed by all those outside, another person entered, not greatly to Matthew's surprise, for she was the lady whom Lenny had half-an-hour ago declared himself to have seen alighting at the 'White Horse,' as the travelling companion of Mr. Filps.

'Well, I never knew such a thing in my life!' cried the astonished Spike. 'Lo and behold! here's *Mrs. Rawlins*! come all the way from the old shop in London! a-purpose to ask after my 'elth, I shouldn't wonder!'

'Don't whisper so loud,' muttered his son, 'else folks will hear, and then they'll think you're a-walkin' and a-talkin' in your sleep.'

'I ain't sure that I'm not, Richard,' replied the father, rubbing his eyes. 'Here, when what we was a-listening to was getting very interesting, in walks people as we shouldn't never have dreamt of seeing. It's just for all the world like a play at a theayter—at the end of the last act, when all the actors come tumblin' in one after another, as if some one had give 'em the hint that it was nearly all over, and if they'd got anything else they particularly wished to say to the audience they'd better look sharp before the curtain was drawd down; and the people a-gettin fidgety, for fear they shouldn't be in time to go out first.'

There was indeed a disturbing movement taking place, but not that of people getting ready to go out, but of those who, like Mrs. Maybright and Mr. Peevers and others following close after Mrs. Rawlins, were coming in.

Mrs. Rawlins, taking up her stand in front of Kate, turned her sternly impassive countenance upon those behind her, as if waiting until they should be quiet.

'Order there, in front!' said Spike, pursuing his idea of being present at a play, and heeding Richard's repeated nudgings only to the extent of lowering his voice. 'Sit down, and don't get uneasy! it'll soon be over, but there's no 'urry; and if the last one do happen

to get locked in all night, why, they'll let him out in the morning, unless he's so beautiful that the management would like to keep him to put along with the masks in next winter's pantermine.'

An urgent nudge from Richard directed the carpenter's notice to the circumstance that Mrs. Rawlins was about to speak.

---

## CHAPTER XLIII.

'MISS HUNSTON, I believe,' said the manageress of the 'Pilgrims' Rest,' in a chilly voice.

'Yes,' replied Kate, following the stern lines of the other's well-cut face.

'You are engaged to be married,' said Mrs. Rawlins.

'Madam !'

'Be patient, and speak gently, darling,' whispered Mrs. Maybright pleadingly to Kate. 'It is our long-lost Fanny, come back as it were from the grave !'

Mr. Maybright flourished his hands and smiled, as if to signify on the one hand that he was quite prepared to maintain this assertion, and, on the other, that he was infallibly certain that Miss Hunston could not be anything but patient and gentle even if she tried.

'Madam ?' repeated Kate in a softer tone.

'It is a matter of common report—as I am informed—that you are engaged to be married,' said Mrs. Rawlins in the same chilly voice.

'Well, whether such a report be afloat or not is surely a matter of not the least consequence in the world,' returned Kate with a smile. 'If any such report really exists, it is a most idle one, and has had no foundation.'

'Has had no foundation?' repeated Mrs. Rawlins slowly, and with an appalling expression gathering over her white face.

It was as though a gamester, having staked his last chance in life, began to fear that he had lost.

Kate would have laughed outright, but for the other's look of tragic despair.

'Have you been trifling with me?' asked Mrs. Rawlins of Mr. Filps.

The words were simple enough, and uttered quietly enough; but Mr. Filps's red face turned more ashy than Mrs. Rawlins' pale one. He shrank away from his travelling companion as though he would rather she did not come too near him.

'That's the man I had it all from,' he stammered, pointing a self-exculpatory finger at the beaming carpenter. 'Now, Spike, don't you deny it; you know when you was in London you gave it to me as if you'd just had it from your son; and since you've been down here yourself, you've give it to me by letter as if you had seen it all with your own eyes, or heard it all with your own ears. Don't deny it, Spike ?'

'Deny it, Mr. Filps, sir!—and put it all on you, sir! Never, sir!' exclaimed the carpenter, throwing a magnanimous smile of protection upon Mr. Filps, the smile of a great man, who, when a mistake has been indisputably brought home to himself, considers that he is committing an act of noble self-effacement in voluntarily exonerating his subordinates from blame which has never been cast upon them. 'You asked me to give you news, sir, and furthermore, sir, you said you must have it, and you would have it, cost what it might—within a reasonable figure, said you—and you was bound to have it; just as if you was a newspaper that must get filled up whether anything has happened or not.'

'Well?' gasped the agitated Filps.

'Well, sir, seein' you must have news, and would have it, at any reasonable figure, why, all I had got to do was to satisfy you. And I did, sir, now, didn't I? Half a word, a hint, a look was enough for me; I saw the rest, and directly I had got it, sir, you had it. I didn't stop to make too many inquiries about anything, and I didn't go over to Carborough every time to get the mayor to certify to the truth of it under the corporation seal; if I had done that, sir, what I'd got to send you wouldn't have been worth having by the time it reached you; no, sir, you had it while it was fresh and *uncontradicted*.'

'But all you sent me,' asked Mr. Filps eagerly, 'was really what you heard talked about?'

'Well, sometimes it happened that-er—I ain't goin' to say such a thing never did happen—sometimes it happened,' replied Spike, reflectively, 'that I didn't wait for even so much as half a word, a hint, or a look; sometimes if a likely idea popped into my head I sent it off to you by the next post—for fear it should by any chance come true, and be all the world's news—as you may say, stale,—before you knew of it.'

'Why, you deceitful villain!' cried Mr. Raymond Filps, 'then you have been reducing my profits for doing what I could have done myself without your help! You have been *inventing* all the time!'

'*Inventin*!' exclaimed Spike, with an affronted air. 'That's a harsh word, Mr. Filps, sir,—*inventin*!' lookin' at things with a liberal eye, and not noticin' too particular what isn't, but makin' generous allowance for what mightier been, you mean, sir—joined with a little prognostication of what nobody can't say *won't* happen;—and when a man is expected to see with his eyes shut what other folks can't see with theirs open, and to hear remarks that other people never heard though they was a-listenin' all the while; why, sir, the least you can allow to such a man is to let him go a *little* upon his imagination, and leave *somethin*' to chance.'

'You shamefaced impostor!' again broke out Mr. Filps, who, by denouncing the carpenter, hoped to escape in some measure from Mrs. Rawlins' wrath—'you have been obtaining money under false pretences!—not a word of what you said was going to happen is come true!'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Filps, sir; it's *all* come true; there now! Look here, sir; I have never had the chance of bein' able to give back very much change out of money that's once been put into my hands; but if what I told you isn't come true, Mr. Filps, well then, sir, I'll pay you back every penny I've had from you!—there, sir!'

Mr. Filps looked puzzled, and glanced round nervously at Mrs. Rawlins. That lady looked as if the time which she had allowed him and the carpenter to explain themselves before she annihilated them was nearly up.

Kate, reflecting that her recent disavowal to the lady in front of her, though perfectly justified by facts, might presently by hasty minds be regarded as mere prevarication; and especially fearing lest Matthew should take her withholding of the truth as a sign that she was half-ashamed of her engagement, suddenly spoke out boldly to Mrs. Rawlins thus,—

'But, notwithstanding what I have just told you, it happens to be true that I *am* engaged to be married.'

'There!' cried Spike to Mr. Filps.

'There!' cried Mr. Filps to Mrs. Rawlins.

'You *are* engaged to be married then,' repeated Mrs. Rawlins, dwelling on her words as though she liked the taste of them—'and to *that man*!'

And swiftly she turned round and pointed to Stopp.

Stopp had been waiting for this, and had been trying to meet the inevitable gaze of all present with a composed exterior; but physical power failed him; his large swollen lips would not remain closed, and, try as he might, he could not keep them from twitching; he tried to look at somebody, in the face, but long disuse of that habit prevented him, and he remained transfixed, as it seemed, by his own sleeve-links.

'I thought—er—er—you were dead,' he stammered, gutturally, as a raven might.

'I know you did,' she flashed back between her white lips. 'I took care—exceeding great care—that you should. You had your revenge: this is mine!'

Then, turning again to the astonished Kate, she said,—

'I must apologise for intruding upon you here, for following you, as it were, into the very midst of your pleasures; but once that it seemed to me that the moment was come for my intervention, once, in fact, that I had set foot in this parish, it was according to my plan to see you without delay, to see you, in short, before that man should have seen me, and so have had time to devise means of frustrating my intention; therefore, not finding you at the rectory, where I had been led to believe you were to be found, and being told where you were gone, I came here without hesitating an instant, to tell you—'

'Yes?' said Kate, in gentle encouragement to the lady to go on.

'That that man to whom you are engaged to be married,' continued Mrs. Rawlins in solemn tones, 'is My Husband!'

'Madam !' cried Kate.

'You are astonished?' surmised Mrs. Rawlins.

'I am indeed astonished, madam, at the strange mistake you have been led into,' returned Kate. 'This is the gentleman to whom I have pledged myself to marry.'

And that there might be no mistake as to which gentleman was meant, she put her arm within Matthew's.

It did not require the look of rage which Mrs. Rawlins turned upon Mr. Raymond Filps to increase the action of that person's heart; it was already knocking at his ribs with such irregularity that it was only with a supreme effort that he could falter, pointing to Matthew,—

'That was the architectural cove from Chamfer's office that I meant. You seemed to twig who I was talking about all the time—and you never mentioned any other architectural cove !'

'Fool !' she hurled at him.

Fearing that something material might follow, and observing an open doorway near at hand, Mr. Filps withdrew—with such rapidity that he was quite astonished to find himself, in what appeared to him about the space of a minute after, getting into the fly at the 'White Horse,' some two miles distant; nor did he begin to feel at ease again until the express train to London, which he happily caught, had been for some time rattling him away from the neighbourhood of the Summer House at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

As for the self-revealed wife of Stopp, she allowed herself to be led by the gentle Mrs. Maybright to a couch in the least crowded part of the room. The rage of disappointed revenge was not the less palpable in her face because she spoke not. The existence which she had so carefully concealed for years, in the hope of revealing it at the moment when her husband was about to make a new marriage, she had now disclosed to everybody—and to no purpose. The fierce blow on which she had so long counted for the satisfaction of her cherished wrath, had been struck in the presence of all whom she had wished to be witnesses of it—and it had stricken the air. She had pursued vengeance only to find that it was not hers.

'The lady seems to have made a mistake,' sneered the villain, Vasper; who, when he had plotted for a marriage between Kate and Stopp, had of course known that the latter was 'Mrs. Rawlins' husband.

'But I haven't made no mistake !' remarked Spike. 'I knew who it was goin' to be !'

And the carpenter looked round for the praise due to the man who accidentally or otherwise has said that which is come true.

'Never mind, my gal,' said Mr. Peevers, bawling out in his audible way; 'you meant it for a knock-down blow, and it wasn't your fault that it missed—just as well, perhaps, for all concerned that it did; however, I always admired you for your pluck, and

while I have got a home, there's always a warm corner in it for you, Fanny.'

And so, after all, Mr. Peevers had not only a warm corner in his house, but one in his heart also.

---

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

'WELL, then, it appears that *you* are snuffed out altogether, Stopp,' said Vasper, with a smile. 'However,' he continued, turning towards Kate and Matthew, 'it leaves nothing now in the way of the Australian vagabond.'

'Yes, it does,' observed Matthew.

'What?'

'Me.'

'You!'

'Yes. You, yourself, have revealed that *I* am the legal owner of these estates.'

'Mat!'

Kate murmured under her breath.

The abbreviation fell from her lips as though they were accustomed to it. Perhaps she was used to thinking of him under that name.

'You say,' continued Matthew in address to Vasper, 'that the deceased Richard Bernock was the legal possessor of the property. Well then, I, as his son—'

'His son!'

exclaimed Vasper derisively. 'And what kind of a son?—over the left, as they say.'

'I quite understand your meaning,' replied Matthew; 'but that is where you have fallen into error. I am his *lawful* son: that I discovered for myself—the only thing about myself that I could discover; the rest you have discovered for me.'

'And the man in Australia?' asked Vasper.

'Is the son of my father, but not the son of my mother,' returned Matthew: 'my father was married once, and only once, and that was to *my* mother; and I am her only child; therefore I am my father's heir. Do I make myself clear?'

'Oh, perfectly,' sneered Vasper. 'We can easily see what it is you would like us to believe. But a word or two of proof will probably be called for before your statement is—bolted.'

'If the lively interest you display in this matter,' said Matthew, 'continues so far unabated as to induce you to put yourself to the trouble of going to Somerset House, you will there find the truth as to my birth. As to the gentleman in Australia, I hope at no distant day to have the opportunity of introducing him to my friends. In the mean time, it is very easy to learn the truth concerning him also. *You* clearly have no authentic information about him; this gentleman has.'

The gentleman indicated was Lenny.

'Lenny,' continued Matthew, 'half-an-hour ago, in answer to a question you put to me, I told you it was not worth while mentioning to any one else, the matter of the message you brought to me from Australia—'

Vasper showed the whites of his eyes at this.

'Until,' went on Matthew, 'I should ask you to do so; which, I added, I was never likely to do. In that surmise I was wrong: I now ask you to repeat here what you told me.'

'How shall I begin, Mat?' asked Lenny, feeling as nervous as a witness in a crowded court, and about to speak in public for the first time.

'Just as you began with me,' replied Matthew.

Vasper put on a sneer, in signification of the slight importance he should attach to what was coming, whatever it might be.

'Well, some time after I had got out to Australia,' commenced Lenny, 'I came across a man of the same name as yourself, Mat; and knowing it to be an uncommon name, and being curious to know if he was any relation of yours, I made his acquaintance. I wasn't slow to tell him that a friend of mine in England—the most intimate friend I had, in fact—was named Bernock. He seemed much seized by this, and asked many questions about you, and was never tired, apparently, of hearing me talk about you. He seemed as if he didn't like to lose sight of me, and did everything he could to help me in my new career, and so brought things about that I found it very much to my advantage that he should not lose sight of me, that I should keep as much under his eye as possible.'

'And what is this man of mystery?' drawled Vasper.

'Not the kind of man you were thinking of,' replied Lenny. 'Not by any means a vagabond, but a man of standing and substance. He was fortunate in the gold fields, and made a small fortune, and now he is doubling it, I don't know how many times over, in sheep farming. It is to him I owe it that I have so rapidly gained the knowledge I possess of how to go to work about things in his part of Australia; and it is by means of this and of his future advice that I hope, when I go back, to turn my little stock of money to the best advantage; and in a new and strange country, let me tell you, it's nearly everything to have learnt the right way to go to work about what you have in view.'

'But what particular communication did he make to you, Lenny?' prompted Matthew.

'To be sure, to keep to the story,' assented Lenny. 'He never said a word about being a relation of yours until I was coming home for a holiday. Almost at the last moment, he said, "You say you are sure to see your friend, Matthew Bernock, when you get back to the old country?" "Yes, if he is still alive," I replied. "Well," he said, "you tell him, if he isn't doing as well in England as he would like to be doing, to come out to me here, and I'll help him to make his fortune; and if he wants money to pay his way out, and



to start with here, he has only got to ask me for it, and he can have all he wants?" I promised to tell you. "And if," he went on, "he is doing as well as he cares about, and don't want to come out, and don't want my help, ask him whether, if I send my eldest boy home to the old country to be educated, he will give the lad a grip of the hand when he lands, and help him to feel that he's still among his own people though two oceans roll between him and those he leaves behind him." And I promised in your name, Mat, that you would.'

'And I will fulfil your promise, Lenny,' said Matthew.

'And who,' inquired Vasper, 'may this very plain-spoken, but at the same time exceedingly sentimental, gentleman be?'

'I asked him,' continued Lenny, still addressing himself to Matthew, 'who I should tell you he was, and he said, "Tell him I am his brother—at least, the son of his father, though not of his mother."'

'And he told you something else, Lenny,' again prompted Matthew.

'Yes,' resumed Lenny; 'he said further, "But I don't want him to be misled as to the truth. Though I received money from my father frequently until—well, until, luckily, I could do without help, I never saw him; he left this country before I was born. My mother was a servant at an hotel where he used to stop, and died before he could come back to marry her."'

Vasper, who in his heart was cursing Chipples for having misled him, here did his best to assume something between a smile and a sneer, but with so pitiful a result, that it attracted the notice of the ever-watchful Spike.

'It seems to be the gentleman what's made the mistake this time!' remarked the carpenter. 'Would you like a glass of water, sir?—you don't look well, sir.'

---

## CHAPTER XLV.

'I SUPPOSE,' at length said Vasper, not without effort to steady his voice, 'that one ought now to congratulate you, Miss Hunston, but it seems so odd to wish you joy on your betrothal—to the son of a convict!'

Kate only drew her arm the tighter round Matthew's.

'Who,' continued Vasper, 'for the want of that highly necessary deed of trust, will be no better off for all his heirship than his father was when, escaped from the hulks, and therefore urgently "wanted" by the police, he skulked about under false names.'

At one flash all became clear to Matthew. Calling to mind such information as Mr. Maybright had been able to give him, he could penetrate now all the darkness, all the misery, of his father's latter days.

'As poor, you mean,' said Matthew, 'as my father became when, after the sudden death of Mr. Hunston, and the subsequent death of his widow, and finally the death of your own father, *you* claimed the property, and thereupon drove a usurer's bargain with him.'

'A very fair bargain,' remarked Vasper; 'and he should have had the sense to hold to it.'

'A bargain, I suppose,' said Matthew, 'by which you allowed him a few hundreds out of the many thousands of his which you annually pocketed. And even that bargain, I have reason to believe, you failed to fulfil for some short time previous to his death.'

'He should have been content with his allowance,' retorted Vasper. 'When he persisted in overstepping that, I threw him overboard; and when he blustered, I told him if he didn't like it he could go for advice to his friends the police, who, as I said, would be delighted to see him—who, in fact, were anxiously looking for him.'

The exertion of will which Matthew made to restrain himself from yielding to tears at the thought of what his father had suffered, probably also saved him from seizing this villain by the throat and dashing the life out of him.

'Now, as to this deed of trust of which we are hearing so much,' he resumed, when he had mastered those two powerful emotions of sorrow and anger, 'you have before you the choice of two things—you can either put the deed unconditionally into my hands, or you can face the risk of a prosecution for conspiracy to defraud the lawful heir to these estates.'

'Conspiracy!' repeated Vasper.

'Yes,' replied Matthew; 'which, if proved, as it certainly could be, might make you also acquainted with the hulks. You surely haven't forgotten that, when you made your iniquitous proposal to this lady, there were besides myself—whom perhaps a court of law would regard as a highly-interested witness—present two others, who certainly are what would be accepted as disinterested witnesses.'

And he pointed round to Spike and Richard.

'You *had* better have a glass of water, sir,' said Spike again to Vasper; 'you look worse than ever, sir!'

'And then, as to the alleged origin of this deed of trust,' continued Matthew, 'the conviction which you seem to have taken advantage of so very much to your own profit—I never so much as even heard of it.'

'Well, now that it turns out that you are the legitimate son of your father—of such a worthy father!' said Vasper—'I can quite believe that you never did know, any more than you ever previously knew, who your father really was; otherwise, I suppose we should have had you putting in *your* claim before. However, I will enlighten you a little. It is pure narrow-mindedness to keep one's discoveries to one's-self. I think I shall join the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and ask them to diffuse this pretty piece of information,—Richard Bernock was charged—you will find the-

main particulars preserved in the records of the Old Bailey, I have no doubt; and in the mean time, I can put at your service a couple of newspapers of the period, in which you can read a full narrative of the affair—Richard Bernock was charged with having forged a cheque on the banking account of a friend of his.’

Kate felt the arm in which her own was still resting contract as if with pain.

‘Which forgery,’ continued Vasper slowly, ‘it was believed he committed in the house of a former acquaintance of your own—one Robert Harkles, lately of the “Golden Sheaf” Inn, situated in the neighbourhood of Holborn, London—

It was Matthew who felt Kate’s arm contract this time.

‘But then of the “Black Swan,” in another locality of London,’ pursued Vasper; ‘which Robert Harkles, I remember, gave evidence establishing that the said Richard Bernock must have had an accomplice in a person whose name was unknown, and who was never brought to justice. Richard Bernock was found guilty and sentenced to a term of penal servitude in the colonies. Soon after his arrival abroad he escaped, and some fifteen years later returned to England. He revealed himself to my predecessors, and played the part of a sort of “manager” to them, spending the rents pretty freely, I believe, in that capacity; but he never ventured to assume his real name, or in any other way to make himself generally known.’

‘And the other man?’ inquired Matthew.

‘Your father’s accomplice in felony?’ said Vasper, with vicious fulness of reference. ‘He has never been heard of from that day to this.’

‘Was no indication likely to lead to his identity preserved of him?’ asked Matthew.

‘None, except the nickname he was known by,’ replied Vasper. ‘There was nothing else to call him by, because, as I have said, no one ever happened to hear his real name—not even your respectable father, which showed how nice he was about the company he kept and the friends he made.’

‘What was this nickname?’ inquired Matthew; ‘if you don’t mind the trouble of trying to remember it.’

‘No trouble in the world,’ responded Vasper, ‘on the contrary, a pleasure, especially as the name throws a light on the character of the acquaintances your estimable parent delighted in. Because the person in question had been, or affected to have been, in the army, he was naturally called captain—I dare say he was a deserter from the ranks—and because, as it appears, he always, as far as was known of him, backed out of everything whenever he possibly could, he gained the additional name of the Shuffler; and so, it would seem, that the only name your father, or any other of the exemplary spirits haunting the “Black Swan” had, during their short but pretty constant acquaintance with the missing man, ever called or known him by, was “Captain Shuffler.”’

'I know the bloke you mean!' cried somebody; and everybody turning round saw that it was Richard who had intervened.

---

CHAPTER XLVI.

'THAT'S right, Richard!' exclaimed his admiring father, the carpenter. 'I thought it was gettin' almost time for your turn to come. It's quite a long time since you troubled the company with *your* ideas of how things was a-lookin'. Now then, Richard, we're a-listenin'.'

'I know the party you mean,' repeated Richard, still in address to Vasper.

'Do you though?' returned Vasper. 'The man I am speaking of was last seen—well, one would have said, more than five-and-twenty years before you were born; however, I always suspected you to be older than you look.'

'It's old Chipples—that's who Captain Shuffler is,' observed Richard.

Having said which, Spike's son looked round to see where he might spit, but changed his mind and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand instead.

'Richard!' exclaimed Matthew, 'what are you thinking about?' He was astonished to hear, as he thought, Richard talking for the first time in his life at random.

The sanguine-natured parson, however, flourished his hands, and by other pantomimic action cheered Richard on, as it were, to go through with it.

And the young and Reverend Gregory Gurgoyne, with an air of authority that for once did not misbecome him, said,—

'Let the youth continue.'

'You recollect that mornin', sir, a long time ago, when I called on you at breakfast,' resumed Richard, this time addressing Matthew—'the mornin' after the night when the old un died?'

'When Mr. Harkles died?'

'Yes, when I had been sittin' up with him,' said Richard; 'and I told you how he'd been a-ramblin' and a-scramblin' in his ideas, and talkin' about what had happened during the day and about what must have took place years and years before, just as though it was all the same and all a-goin' on together; and how he'd been runnin' on about Chipples, because Chipples had been aggravatin' him by trying to make some excuse or another for my Bloke here,' pursued Richard, jerking his head towards his admiring parent, 'and how he said Chipples had better mind, he said, and then he went on mutterin' and gabblin' about Chipples, and then he let out somethin' I never knew before, and I asked you if I should tell you what it was, and you said, if it didn't in anyways concern you, you said, why, I was to keep it to myself, you said, which I thought it

didn't, and so I never said another word about it. You recollect, sir, don't yer?'

'I do, quite distinctly, Richard,' replied Matthew.

Richard again compromised an intention to expectorate by wiping his mouth, and then continued,—

'Well, what the old un said about Chipples was this:—"I know him, he says, for all it's so long since he used to come to the 'Black Swan' with the t'other. It's Captain Shuffler, as they nicknamed him,—that's who he is," he said; "and I'd have split on him if it would have done the t'other any good or his memory; but it wouldn't, and whether he's alive or dead I don't know; but I was sorry for him, because I always liked him; and I do believe it was this un that was the real guilty one; but there, I don't want to do him no harm, and so I won't say anything about it; but he oughtn't to aggravate me;"—that's what the old un said about Chipples.'

And then Richard grew silent, and contemplated the company.

'You see,' said Vasper, 'there is not wanting collateral evidence that what I have told you is correct. Obviously the "other one," mentioned by old Muddle-Wit, was your admirable father, the convicted felon. Doubtless you can now get confirmation of the pretty story by applying to Chipples.'

'Mr. Chipples is dead,' spake the voice of Stopp's wife.

'Can you affirm that as an absolute certainty?' inquired the reverend young Mr. Gregory Gurgoyle.

'I can,' answered Mrs. Stopp; 'I saw him die.'

'Drunk, or in a workhouse, no doubt,' commented Vasper.

'Neither,' said Mrs. Stopp. 'I saved him from both one and the other end. He died in his own lodgings, and not wanting such means of lessening his pains as I could procure for him.'

'Did he make no communication to you or to any one else before he died?' asked the young ecclesiastic.

'He seemed to be troubled with a desire to do so; but he could neither speak nor move his hands.'

'I think I can make known what it was he was so anxious to give utterance to,' said the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle; 'and now that he is dead, I feel sure I shall be carrying out his wishes in doing so.'

'Cert'n'y, let the gen'l'm'n in the 'at speak,' murmured Spike, the carpenter; but in a voice audible only to his son, who again nudged him to be quiet. 'He's thought of it just in time; another minute, and he'd have been too late to say it.'

'Some year and half or so ago,—not very long after your arrival here, Mr. Bernock,' said the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle, 'I had occasion to go up to the metropolis. In discharge of what I regarded as a duty attaching to relationship, I made it my business to devote an evening to that which, I hoped, might prove an edifying conversation with my kinsman here: you remember, John?'

'I do, Bob,' replied Mr. Jack Gurgoyle; continuing, in a whisper to Pattie,—'listen to our young patriarch.'

'There was present on that occasion, besides my kinsman,' proceeded the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle, 'the person of whom we are speaking, Mr. Chipples. His demeanour struck me as most strange.'

'Strange if it hadn't, considering how poor Chipples had been helping himself out of the whisky bottle,' whispered Jack to his wife.

'We both left my relative's house together,' continued the young curate, 'and when outside, my companion's manner grew stranger than ever. A few paces from the door he entreated me to sit down with him on some door-steps, as he had something of the greatest importance, he said, to communicate to me. I asked him if it was because of the sacred office I filled that he wished me to be the recipient of his confidence.'

'He replied that it was; and seeing that he wept, and thinking that he stood in urgent need of such consolation as I could afford him, I accompanied him to his lodgings, and there received his communication. It was of so extraordinary a nature that I requested his permission to reduce it to writing.'

'And what was the wonderful statement?' asked Vasper, whose curiosity was not wholly concealed in his manifestation of contempt.

'It was only when I was about to hand the writing to the unfortunate man to sign,' pursued the curate, waiving the question for a moment, 'that I discovered in what state he was. I observed with horror that he had been partaking—very largely partaking—of strong drink: he had by this time almost entirely succumbed to its influence. It was with difficulty that I, assisted by his landlady, could partially undress him and get him to bed.'

'But the statement?' inquired Vasper with undisguised impatience.

'It was so important,' said the Reverend Gregory Gurgoyle, 'that I made a point of calling on him in the morning. He had some recollection of what had passed the previous night, and seemed very anxious to know exactly what he had said. When I read to him from my writing the statement which he had made he showed great terror, and implored me to regard it as a privileged confession, and not to impart it to any one while he lived. He declared that the person whom it was most concerned was dead, and that the son of that person, meaning yourself, Mr. Bernock—the only other person interested—was wholly ignorant of the affair. He said, however, that it was his earnest desire that the confession should be made known to you after his death, and on giving my word not to divulge what he had said until after his decease—except in the event of an urgent necessity for so doing appearing to me to arise, of which I was to give him due warning—he consented to sign the statement. The moment is now arrived, I think, when it should be published.'

'Everybody thought it had arrived when you said you knew what

it was the old man wanted to say on his deathbed,' observed Vasper, who was giving way unrestrainedly to ill-temper now that he began to fear that his last weapon of annoyance was about to be struck from his grasp.

'This document I shall of course take the earliest opportunity of putting into your own hands, Mr. Bernock,' continued the curate. The statement itself, divested of its numerous details, is briefly to this effect: First, James Chipples had had accidentally and unfortunately presented to him the opportunity of handling unseen the bank cheque-book of a person who was both an acquaintance of his and of Richard Bernock's—one Edmund Smith: he yielded to the temptation, took one of the forms, filled it up for a considerable sum, forged Edmund Smith's signature to it, got it cashed at the bank, fled, and was, as most people thought, never heard of again. But in forging the cheque, he had used a blotting-pad lying on a table in the sitting-room at the "Black Swan" hotel which was engaged by his acquaintance, Richard Bernock, leaving a clear trace of the false signature on the blotting-sheet; and he had also, while Richard Bernock was intoxicated, lent him a five-pound note, one of the notes given in exchange for the cheque at the bank. This note being traced to the unhappy Bernock, and the imprint of the forged signature in his blotting book being discovered, he was convicted and punished as the principal offender in the matter; Chipples being regarded as a mere tool who had been made use of to get the cheque presented at the bank. Secondly, when, many years after Richard Bernock's escape from transportation, he encountered Chipples, the latter insisted that it was the former who had really forged the signature, but that being drunk when he did it he had forgotten it; an assertion which the unhappy victim, whether he gave credence to it or not, felt himself unable to disprove; and so, regarding himself only as an escaped convict, he went on concealing his identity under an assumed name.'

'Poor fellow!' exclaimed Mrs. Maybright, with swimming eyes.

'But the truth about my old friend,' exclaimed the parson, grasping Matthew by the hand, 'is established at last! I always loved him.'

'And so,' whispered Kate to the new Squire, 'the victory over wrong has slowly but surely been won.'

As, slowly—but not surely—that other victory, of which none but Matthew knew, had been won, the victory over himself.

THE END.

## Routledge's Railway Library Advertiser.

Bruises,

Burns,

Cancer,

Chilblains,

Cuts,

Eczema,

Eruptions,

Eyes Inflamed,

Gangrene,

A SOVEREIGN REMEDY FOR



*Pillule Antiscrophulæ.*

Price 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., 11s., 22s.

SOLD BY THE PROPRIETORS—

BEACH & BARNICOTT, Bridport.

Pimples,

Scorbutic

Complaints,

Skin Dis-

eases, and

Ulcerated

Legs, even

if of Twen-

ty years'

standing.

## MELLIN'S FOOD FOR INFANTS & INVALIDS.



For the Healthful Rearing of Hand-fed Children and the Preservation of Infant Life, and for the Nourishment of Invalids who cannot Digest Ordinary Food. Entirely Soluble, and not Farinaceous. Price 1s. 6d. and 2s. 6d. per bottle.

Prospectus and sample bottle sent post-free on application.

INVENTOR AND MANUFACTURER,

G. MELLIN, Marlboro' Works, Peckham,  
LONDON, S.E.

NO MORE SCURF OR IRRITATION.

BALDNESS PREVENTED.

## LINEHAM'S HAIR-DRESSING BALSAM.

The best for Nursery and Toilet. Fragrant and Beautiful. 1s. & 2s. per bottle.

LINEHAM'S PREMATURE GREY HAIR REGENERATOR, unequalled for quality and price, 1s. 6d. From Mr. C. H. Smith, Perfumer, 144, Cleethorpes Road, Grimsby, July 17th, 1883.—"Mr. Lineham,—Your Regenerator beats all the Restorers I have seen or tried.—I remain, yours truly, C. H. SMITH."

LINEHAM'S INSTANTANEOUS WHISKER DYE, 1s. and 2s. 6d. If you cannot obtain them, send Order to Newark-on-Trent. Three Large Bottles Carriage Paid.



## BURTON'S TURKISH OR ROMAN BATHS

For Ladies and Gentlemen,

182 & 184, EUSTON ROAD,

NEAR EUSTON SQUARE, N.W.

Established 1859.

## WHELPTON'S VEGETABLE PURIFYING PILLS

ESTABLISHED 1835.



proved their efficacy will do well to give them a trial.

Are one of those rare Medicines which, for their extraordinary properties, have gained an almost *Universal Reputation*.

During a period of nearly FIFTY YEARS they have been used most extensively as a FAMILY MEDICINE, thousands having found them a simple and safe remedy, and one needful to be kept always at hand.

These Pills are purely vegetable, being entirely free from Mercury or any other Mineral, and those who may not hitherto have

Recommended for Disorders of the HEAD, CHEST, BOWELS, LIVER, and KIDNEYS; also in RHEUMATISM, ULCERS, SORES, and all SKIN DISEASES—these Pills being a *direct purifier of the Blood*.

In Boxes, price 7½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d., by G. WHELPTON & SON, 3, Crane Court, Fleet Street, London, and sent free to any part of the United Kingdom on receipt of 8, 14, or 38 Stamps. Sold by all Chemists at Home and Abroad. \*\*





# FREEMAN'S CHLORODYNE,

THE ORIGINAL & ONLY TRUE.  
IT IS THE GREATEST MEDICAL DISCOVERY OF  
THE PRESENT CENTURY.

It is the best known remedy for Coughs, Colds, Consumption, Whooping Cough, Bronchitis, and Asthma.  
It effectually checks and arrests those too often fatal Diseases—Diphtheria, Diabetes, Fever, Croup, Ague, &c.  
It acts like a charm in Diarrhoea, and is the only known Specific in Cholera and Dysentery.  
It effectually cuts short all attacks of Epilepsy, Hysteria, Palpitation, Convulsions, and Spasms.  
It is the only Palliative in Rheumatism, Gout, Cancer, Toothache, Meningitis, &c.  
It rapidly relieves pain from whatever cause, allays the irritation of Fever, soothes and strengthens the system under exhaustive diseases, restores the deranged functions, stimulates healthy action of the secretions of the body, gives quiet and refreshing sleep, and marvellously prolongs life. It may be taken by old and young at all hours and times.

## SPECIMEN TESTIMONIALS.

From JOHN TAYNOR, M.D., L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., L.S.A., L.M. Physician to Farringdon Dispensary, Physician to the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's Metropolitan College, London, &c. "102, Harley Street, Cavendish Square, W."

"It gives me great pleasure to bear testimony in favour of FREEMAN'S Chlorodyne. I have prescribed it extensively, and in cases of Asthma, Chronic Bronchitis, the last stage of Phthisis, and the Winter Cough of the aged, I have never found any substitute or chemical combination its equal."

From J. DODD SWALLOW, M.D., M.R.C.S., Eng.; L.A.S.; Medical Officer to the London City Missions &c., &c. "113, Clapham Road, London, S.W."

"I have great pleasure in stating that I am constantly prescribing FREEMAN'S Chlorodyne, in Consumption and Asthma and as a Sedative in Cancer, and in cases of Diarrhoea and Dysentery. I am daily witnessing its striking effects."

Manufactured by the sole Inventor, RICHARD FREEMAN, Pharmacist, 70, Kennington Park Road, London, S.W. Sold by Chemists and Patent Medicine Dealers in all parts of the World, in Bottles, 1s. 10d.; 2-oz. 3s. 6d.; 4-oz. 6s. 6d.; half-pint, 11s.; and pint, 20s. each.

Purchasers are cautioned not to have palmed upon them any substitute. There are other articles bearing the name of Chlorodyne, but quite devoid of its wonderful effects. See that the Trade Mark, "The Elephant" is on the wrapper, &c., and that the words Freeman's Original Chlorodyne are engraved on the Government Stamp, which is the only true Chlorodyne.

## PEPPER'S QUININE AND IRON Tonic. HEALTH, STRENGTH, ENERGY.

Great Bodily Strength,  
Great Nerve Strength,  
Great Mental Strength,  
Great Digestive Strength  
follows the use of PEPPER'S QUININE  
AND IRON Tonic.

Bottles, 2s. doses. Sold by Chemists everywhere.  
Beware of Imitations. Insist on having Pepper's.

## PEPPER'S TARAXACUM AND PODOPHYLLIN.

A fluid Liver Medicine, made from

### PADELION AND MANDRAKE ROOTS.

Good for Liver Disorder and Indigestion.  
The best Antibilious Remedy.  
Without a particle of Mercury.  
Safest and surest Stomach and Liver Medicine.  
Clears the Head and cures Headache.  
Regulates the Bowels.

Bottles, 1s. doses. Sold by most Chemists. Decline imitations; many Chemists professing their own to equal Pepper's renowned Liver preparation.

## SULPHOLINE LOTION THE CURE FOR SKIN DISEASES IN A FEW DAYS.

Eruptions, Pimples, Blotches, entirely  
fade away.  
Beautifully Fragrant. Perfectly Harmless.  
Cures Old standing Skin Diseases.  
It Removes every kind of Eruption, Spot, or  
Blemish, and Renders the Skin Clear,  
& Smooth, Supple, and Healthy.  
Sulpholine Lotion is sold by Chemists. Bottles, 2s. 6d.

## LOCKYER'S SULPHUR HAIR RESTORER. THE BEST. THE SAFEST. THE CHEAPEST.

Restores the Colour to Grey Hair.  
Instantly stops the Hair from falling.  
Occasionally used, Greyness is impos-  
sible.

Where the Sulphur Restorer is applied scurf cannot  
exist, and a sense of cleanliness, coolness, &c., pre-  
vails, which cannot result from daily plastering the  
hair with grease. Sold everywhere in large bottles  
holding almost a pint, 1s. 6d. each. Be sure to have  
Lockyer's.

**SPECIALTIES  
FOR ALL**

**Sold by the principal Druggists at  
Home and Abroad.**

**THE YEAR  
ROUND.**

**JACKSON'S  
CHINESE  
DIAMOND  
CEMENT.**

**FOR MENDING EVERY ARTICLE OF ORNAMENT OR  
FURNITURE, CHINA, GLASS, EARTHENWARE, AND  
WHAT-NOT.**

T. J., in making this Cement, has constantly kept in view the production of an article fit for general household purposes, easy to use, and which would, with average care, repair damages, so that the mended articles should be able to do duty alongside the sound ones, and bear the wear and tear of the set. He has aimed to make a Cement of stable composition, neither apt to decay nor to lose its good qualities, although carried to the Antipodes or kept untouched for years.

**AT  
6d. and 1s.,  
by Inland Post  
14 Pence.**

**JACKSON'S  
INCENSE  
SPILLS.**

A Neat and Antiseptic fashion of perfuming a House, one of those rare cases of Ancient Custom and Modern Science being in accord.—When Smouldering, these Spills yield a fragrance which diffuses itself throughout a room, charging the atmosphere with sweet odours.

**At 6d., by  
Inland Post  
7d.**

**H.R.H.  
Prince Albert's  
Cachoux.**

Dainty morsels  
in the form of tiny silver  
Bullets, which dissolve in the  
mouth, and surrender to the  
Breath their hidden fragrance.  
The little caskets containing  
the Cachoux bear a fine medallion of  
the late Prince Consort. They are  
also furnished with the "Albert  
Gate Latch" (Registered), being  
Thomas Jackson's contrivance  
for paying out the  
Cachoux singly.

**At  
SIXPENCE,  
by Post,  
7d.**

**JACKSON'S  
RUSMA.**

**FOR REMOVAL OF HAIR from the Arms, Neck, or  
Face, without the use of the Razor, as well as Sun-  
burn or Tan from the Skin. The activity of this  
DEPILATORY is notable. It works without pain, it  
leaves a whole Skin and a clean complexion.**

**At 1s., by  
Inland Post  
1s. 2d.**

**JACKSON'S  
BENZINE  
RECT.**

**For taking out GREASE, OIL, PAINT, &c., FROM  
ALL ABSORBENT FABRICS, DRESS OR  
DRAPERY. Furs, Gloves, Slippers, Books, and  
Manuscripts, it cleans with equal success. It may be  
freely used to wash Gilt surfaces to which water is  
destructive. It is a handy and effective insecticide.**

**At 6d., 1s.,  
and 2s. 6d.  
Parcels Post  
3d. extra.**

**1884.**

**FROM  
THOM  
Strange**

**Postage  
for Abroad, as  
Letter Rate to  
same Places.**

# PEARS' SOAP

## A SPECIALTY FOR THE COMPLEXION

*Recommended by SIR ERASMUS WILSON, F.R.S., late President  
of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, as*

*"The most refreshing and agreeable of balms for the skin."*

---

**MDME. ADELINA PATTI** writes:—"I have  
found PEAR'S SOAP *matchless for the hands  
and complexion.*"

**MRS. LANGTRY** writes:—"Since using PEAR'S  
SOAP for the hands and complexion, *I have  
discarded all others.*"

**MDME. MARIE ROZE** (*Prima Donna, Her  
Majesty's Theatre*) writes:—"For preserving  
the complexion, keeping the skin soft, free  
from redness and roughness, and the hands in  
nice condition, PEAR'S SOAP *is the finest  
preparation in the world.*"

**MISS MARY ANDERSON** writes:—"I have  
used PEAR'S SOAP for two years with the  
greatest satisfaction, for *I find it the very best.*"

---

**PEARS' SOAP—SOLD EVERYWHERE**